UP · AND DOWN THE SANDS OF GOLD

MARY DEVEREUX

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Oct 1901.

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THE SANDS OF GOLD

BY

MARY DEVEREUX

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A TOKEN OF GRATITUDE

TO

MY MOTHER

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"The ocean old,
Centuries old;
Strong as youth, and as uncontrolled,
Paces restless to and fro,
Up and down the sands of gold."

LONGFELLOW.

Up and Down the Sands of Gold

CHAPTER I

THE heat of a clear summer day beat upon the earth. Along the dusty highway the delicate wild roses bloomed fair and sweet. By the pools, the rushes, tall and stately, seemed to gaze at their own reflection in the water beneath; and the reeds down near the shore swayed with a slow grace, like waltzers, to the music of the waves that murmured as they lapped the rocks. The late July fields sent up their dry fragrance to the glowing sky, and across the meadows the heat went rolling and rocking, mixed with the scent of newly-cut grass, and then, reaching the shore, was lost in the sea.

Out on one of the many rocky headlands sat Doctor Jasper. Back of him the little town receded to meet the hills, rising, tier upon tier, far away to the west. Below him the lichen-covered ledges fell, low and lower, down to the sea, where the tide — just at the turn — was tossing and lifting the thick growth of olive-green and brown seaweed, and showing the brighter colors of the undergrowing masses.

The Doctor's eyes, lazily overlooking the harbor, wandered out to the line that seemed to join sea and sky, where now and again a sail would slowly shadow into ship-shape. And a prayer of thanks-

giving was in his heart as there came to him the keen realization of all this peace, and he contrasted it with a few weeks before, when there was sounding in his ears the din of war.

El Caney, and the days that followed, with all their sickening horrors, seemed strange to remember as actualities in the face of this summer day of restfulness by the same sea that knew Cuba's far-off shore. And he was glad to think of them as parts of a dream from which he had awakened none too soon.

Upon the next headland down shore was a curious-looking building, very small and brown, — brown as an autumn leaf, and quite as guiltless of paint.

The door opening toward the street was always closed during the summer; and over it, securely nailed, sign-like, was something calculated to awaken wonder in the mind of an inquisitive visitor. It was a long, narrow strip of board, upon which the once red paint had been weather-beaten to a dull brown; and the faded lettering, in black and white, read: "Betsey Brett."

The odd little building was Uncle Darb's shoe-shop and fish-market, combined; and the proprietor was "Uncle Darb" to all the town.

One fall night, years before, during a northeast gale, this board, battered and soaked, had come riding in on the crest of a great breaker, all that was left to tell of some perished craft and her crew. It was picked up by Uncle Darb; and Eben, his apprentice, had nailed it above the door of the shop, which came to be spoken of as the "Betsey Brett."

And the place was, in its way, quite as much of a resort for certain privileged ones, as were pretentious club-houses.

An opening in the east side led out to a rudely made platform, surrounded by a strong railing, which served as a back for the wooden benches built along three sides. The whole was roofed with tarred canvas, and of this material also was the door of the summer entrance, looped up and back in a way to afford free access to the shop within. But when the east winds and fall storms blew up a promise of "rheumatiz" for Uncle Darb's bones, this opening was boarded up, the street door was opened, and the cobwebs and dust brushed from the small windows either side of it.

Out on the platform of the "Betsey Brett" this summer afternoon, one bench and the half of another were filled by the old gaffers who had long been *habitués* of the place, while Uncle Darb, perched upon a high stool in their midst, was scanning the horizon through his spyglass.

Below, at the base of the headlands, the waves —

> "With their ain eerie croon,
> Working their appointed work,
> And never, never done,"

filled in the pauses, which were many and long, in the old men's talk.

They looked as wise as old Greek philosophers; but if any wisdom really existed within them it must have been strictly guarded, for no atom of it ever escaped.

They had been coming to the "Betsey Brett" so regularly, and for so many years, that the matter had resolved itself into a sort of club basis. A large placard upon the side-wall of the building, over where the thread of a path led around to the platform, proclaimed: "Private Property." And yet these privileged old gaffers knew that at certain hours, and with the regularity of the tides and seasons, they were expected at the platform, there to sit, and smoke, and look wise; to gaze out over the sea and ships; to lay down laws — their own — for earth and man.

Uncle Darb, resting the glass across his duck-like legs, broke an unusually long silence by remarking, "Doctor Noel Jasper seems to be sort o' settled here."

"He be," assented the most ancient of the gaffers, taking the pipe from his mouth; whereat they all fixed their faded old eyes upon the silent Doctor, as though he had become an object of the most absorbing interest.

"Wa'n't he here last fall?" inquired a second of the lot, turning his face slowly toward the one who had just spoken.

But Uncle Darb, in his capacity of chairman, took it upon himself to answer the question.

"Yes; but only for a few days, when he brought Tom Leslie's body home."

"How was thet?" asked another one. "Ye see I was back in the country, visitin' my daughter Mirandy, 'bout thet time; an' I never knew nothin' 'bout it."

"Wa'l," said Uncle Darb, twisting himself half-way around, "'t was like this: The Doctor an' Tom met an' took up together somewheres over in Europe, when Tom was travellin' there; an' they took a big shine to each other. An' then when Tom got hurt climbin' that mountain, the Doctor was with him, an' nursed him till he died. An' then he gev up the rest o' his own trip, an' brought poor Tom back."

"Thet was the way of it, was it?"

"Yes. But he only stayed here till the funeral was over, an' then he was off ag'in."

"I 've heerd tell thet Cap'n Nat Leslie 's thought a deal o' him ever sence, an' 'vited him down here more 'n onct. But they say he 's a great traveller, an' don't stay in one place very long."

This came in a wheezy voice from a thin little gaffer in the angle of the benches.

"That 's so, too," said Uncle Darb. "They say he 's been purty much everywheres, an' to all sorts o' strange places. I heerd Cap'n Nat tellin' o' how he went down to Cuby when the war broke out, to see what he could do for the boys, as he knew all bout the country an' climate. But he did n't like the way things was run, an' ended by gittin' sick himself; an' so he come back ag'in. I guess he 's an independent sort o' chap, an' one as likes to have things his own way."

The others nodded in acquiescence; and Uncle Darb went on, "I heerd some one say he 'd taken board for all summer at Marm Bessly's."

"He hev," intoned the patriarch.

"Hum," said Uncle Darb reflectively; "she's a rattler, an' no mistake. She can jest raise cummins — she can. D' ye mind the time old Pop Bessly was livin', an' she sent him out one day to bring in the clean clothes off'n the line?"

"No," replied the asthmatic little gaffer in the corner.

"She says to him as she pushed him out'n the door, — says she, 'An' mind don't ye so much as tech 'em with your dirty fingers.' Ho — ho!" roared Uncle Darb; and all the gaffers echoed him, showing many toothless gums as they opened their mouths in ecstasies of laughter.

Their merriment aroused Doctor Jasper, who glanced smilingly toward them; but the gaffers' eyes, without their spectacles, could discern neither smile nor frown so far away. Uncle Darb alone caught and returned the friendly look; and then he once more consulted his spyglass, while the others gave their undivided attention to their pipes.

Beneath the headland where the Doctor sat, two old sailors, with a younger man, were getting a sloop ready to start out.

"Sam," came the gruff voice of one of the elder men, the tones sounding hollow and half-smothered, his head being within one of the several small stowaways of the craft, "look up-street, an' see ef'n ye don't see Cap'n Jack now."

This was the third time Doctor Jasper had heard the same command given; and young Sam Ayres, having obeyed his father's orders, answered as twice before, "Nary sign o' him." And this in turn was

followed by a grumble of impatience from the senior Ayres.

The other member of the waiting party was a sailor of sixty or thereabouts, who stood, hands in pockets, gazing seaward, his stocky figure swaying with the boat's motion, and his teeth tightly clenching a short black pipe from which clouds of blue smoke ascended about his silvered head.

"Patience, mate, er bit longer," he said, turning toward old Ayres; and although he spoke in would-be soothing tones his voice was like the low rumble of distant thunder. "I promised ther lad we 'd wait; I promised him true. An' he don't git away from his grandame's apron strings ev'ry day."

"She 's like as not hinderin' him now," growled old Ayres, his voice less hollow as his red face came out into the daylight, while he drew the back of one hand across his lips, in a way to suggest that something other than fishing tackle or tarred rope was stowed in the cuddy.

He had scarcely spoken when young Sam called from the rocks where he had been standing to obtain a better view down the road, "There, Uncle Billy, — he 's comin'."

Doctor Jasper, who knew but few of the townspeople, looked up to see what this "Cap'n Jack" might be like. And in doing so he found himself watching, in a mechanical sort of way, old Mrs. Wilcox's stout figure as she waddled down the street, wrapped (although the day was warm) in a vividly red shawl. Then he was reminded of his country's flag, as he saw something blue mingling with the red.

The blue and the red appeared to pause and converse. Presently they separated; and the blue, coming nearer, proved to be a lad of six or seven, clad in a flannel suit of that color, and who, seeing Sam, took off his broad-brimmed straw hat and swung it joyously as he greeted him in a curiously sweet voice.

As he came up the rocks past Doctor Jasper, the latter's keen eyes noted how nobly he was fashioned for such a little fellow, with a finely shaped head, set firmly upon a round white neck, and with a dash of brown over cheeks and ears glowing with a healthful rosiness. The face was winsome, and the features had not lost their baby softness and roundness.

His thick, curly hair, closely cropped, glittered like gold-dust, and the frank eyes that glanced shyly at the Doctor were tawny as the sea sand under the glow of the afternoon sun.

"Hurry up, ye young monkey, if yer want ter board ther 'Pretty Sally,'" Uncle Billy called out, his smiling face belying the gruff tone, as he looked at the child, to see him caught in the strong arms of young Sam Ayres, and carried, with a clatter of feet, and much laughter, down the rocks and aboard the "Pretty Sally," where he was deposited carefully upon an extra sail heaped in the bow.

CHAPTER II

THE sail of the "Pretty Sally" being set, and her anchor lifted, she started slowly out into the harbor, where the wind, blowing steadily, soon quickened her speed, until before long she began to grow dim in the far-off, pearly haze.

Doctor Jasper, watching idly, saw her fade away like drifting smoke; and the sun's warmth beginning to make itself disagreeable, he was thinking of betaking himself to the cool half-light of his own room, when his attention was drawn to a girl's voice, singing, and seeming to come from beneath his feet.

The song was "The Armorer's Daughter;" and although she sang but a few lines of it, he came to know all of them only too well before the summer was gone.

"The armorer's daughter is young and fair,
(Flowers are sweet in the summer-tide)
The sun shines full on her loose gold hair,
(Wanderers rest where the roads divide).
Strays a youth in the noonday heat;
Lute on shoulder he saunters by;
'A cup of water, I prithee, sweet,
Ways are long when the roads are dry.'

"Scores of travellers come and go;
All may linger, but one may stay,
Cease from wandering to and fro,
Rest for many a summer day.

'Sweet, my love, we must say farewell,'
(Cold and faint is the autumn sun);
'Now must I break from thy beauty's spell.'
(Leaves fall fast when the summer's done.)

"'Northward far, by a steel-gray sea,
A proud king's daughter, all clothed in red,
Crowned with rubies, now waits for me.
She it is I must surely wed.
Speak one sorrowing word to me,'
(Flowers are sweet in the summer-tide),
'Farewell, sweet lady!' 'Farewell!' said she,
(Wanderers rest where the roads divide).

"So she watches him out of sight,
Standing still, where the roads divide.
End must come to a month's delight,
Roses die with the summer-tide.
Slow and faltering grows her tread,
(Winds are chill on a winter's night),
Pale her lips that once were red,
(Fair are the frost-flowers, cold and white).

"Now the winter is gone and past,
Violets bloom in the early spring.
Rests the armorer's maid at last,
Soft green grass for a covering.
White buds bloom at her feet and head,
(Flowers are sweet in the summer-tide),
Well she sleeps in her narrow bed,
(Wanderers rest where the roads divide)."

The voice was a strong, rich contralto which Doctor Jasper thought he recognized; and the singer was evidently within one of the many little caves that ran in under the rocks beneath him.

The gaffers, to judge by their craned necks and fixed eyes, were trying to make her out from their

projecting perch upon the platform of the "Betsey Brett." And Uncle Darb, who had walked to the edge, and was looking in the same direction, now called out, "Hi, there, Miss Marg'ret!"

"Ship ahoy, Uncle Darb!" answered a girlish voice, with a note of laughter underlying it.

"I 've sent them lobsters up to the house. Eben got in from the pots sooner 'n I thought he would."

"Oh, yes; very well; thank you," came back rather disjointedly, for she was now climbing out, and making her way to the headland beyond, where Doctor Jasper saw her standing a few minutes later.

A tall, lithe girl of nineteen, her smooth skin somewhat darkened by tan, with fearless, honest eyes, blue as the sea, and a boyish crop of short, curly brown hair which the sunlight touched with bronze glintings; low-cut shoes on her shapely little feet displayed from beneath a rather short black skirt; small gloveless hands half-slipped into the jacket pockets; hat tilted over the nose, and a book under her arm.

She stepped lightly from ledge to ledge, unconscious of the Doctor's presence, pausing once or twice with her back toward him, and seeming to be looking off over the sea.

He arose to join her. But before he could speak, she glanced around in a startled way, a quick color flushing her cheeks, and then smiled as she recognized him.

"I wonder," said Uncle Darb to the gaffers, "I wonder how Cap'n Leslie 'll feel when his Peggy comes to go?"

"Eh?" grunted the gaffers in an inquiring chorus, as they all watched the man and girl turn their backs to the sea, and take the way leading up into the town.

"I mean," and Uncle Darb adjusted his glass for another look seaward, "when Marg'ret Leslie comes to get married; I wonder how Cap'n Nat 'll weather that gale? No other gal in town can compare with her; she beats the hull lot of 'em."

To this there was no response. But the gaffers sat in solemn silence, gazing at one another, while they wagged their grizzled heads and tried to look discriminating.

Margaret Leslie and Doctor Jasper were meanwhile sauntering in the shade of the great horse-chestnuts and elms that arched the road leading in eccentric windings to what was known as "the old Leslie place," which had for its master and mistress the Captain and his only daughter.

Yet while by courtesy and right of inheritance Margaret was the old homestead's mistress, Eliza, the Captain's housekeeper (and in her own estimation the most reliable head of the house), would have experienced something of a shock had she been called upon to acknowledge as such the girl who was to her the same child whose soiled pinafores she had washed and ironed years before, and whose torn frocks she had so often mended, while scolding the wearer for "actin' jest like a tom-boy!"

The gable-roofed and dormer-windowed house had been the home of several generations of Leslies. It was a large, square, old-fashioned frame mansion,

painted white, with green blinds, and, standing well back from the street, was almost hidden in a grove of gigantic elms which made it a picture of inviting coolness on a hot day.

In the rear of the house was a large, irregularly laid-out garden, where, amongst the vegetables, sweet flowers bloomed riotously all the summer through. Then came a lawn, or "bleaching-ground;" and back of this the orchard, so thickly intergrown that in spring it was a perfect sea of blossoms; and where later, underneath the foliage and ripening fruit, scarcely a ray of sunlight was able to find its way.

"I heard you singing," Doctor Jasper was saying to Margaret. "Have you a cave in the rocks where you retire at times, to become a Lorelei, and lure the passing sailor to his fate? I could see that you were charming the old fellows on the 'Betsey Brett.'"

His voice was deep and full, accentuating its would-be gravity; but this was belied by the gleam showing in his gray eyes.

The girl looked up at him and laughed. "I don't think you have paid me much of a compliment," she said.

"Why not? I think old men have often a very keen sense of the sweetness of music — especially sea-faring men. And I have always found Jack much more sentimental than his land brother."

"Yes," she assented; "that is doubtless true. But I really have a cave of my own, where I go to sit and read or sew. I must show it to you some

time; and then I suspect you 'll want to rent a share of it."

"I think it might be very possible, for I have already found several things in the life here which I should be most happy to share." And he looked down smilingly into her bright face.

She flushed slightly, and was silent, until he asked, "How long have you been the possessor of this valuable property?"

"Oh, ever so long. When I was only a little girl I used to play there. Our mother died when Tom and I were small children; and our great-aunt Sanley, who lived with us and brought us up, was rather a severe disciplinarian. I think I must have had even more 'pepper' in my make-up then, although papa tells me I have a generous supply now — at times; for she and I sometimes made each other very unhappy. And, when climaxes came, I would run away to the cave with my dolls, and stay there until the weather cleared."

"It strikes me as an excellent thing to have a cave to which one can retire occasionally," said the Doctor, with a moody look which seemed to clash with what might have been the facetiousness of his words and tone, — this, however, changing to that of reminiscence, together with a touch of sadness, as he continued, "Now I remember a cave in Norway, that — we — that is — " He stammered, and then paused.

Margaret glanced up at his face; and her sympathetic nature — quick to reflect the feelings of those near her, as a sheet of placid water throws back

whatever may be over it — led her to understand what he would have said.

"You mean last year, when —" Then she, too, stopped, as her voice grew tremulous.

It was the bringing to her and her father of all that was left of Tom Leslie, that had made Doctor Jasper known to them. And she knew that her brother's frank-hearted, winning nature had found a place in the elder man's friendship which long years might not have acquired for another.

The Doctor felt that he and Margaret were nearing dangerous ground; for he had never, despite his profession, been able to accustom himself to a woman's tears. And he was greatly relieved when a sudden diversion was created by a huge dog rushing toward the girl, as if welcoming her home.

"Fin, be still. Quiet, boy!" she said, tottering at his rough onslaught, but patting his head as he now stood beside her. Then, at her command, he strode sedately along, proudly swaying his plume-like tail, and lifting his great brown eyes to her face.

"What a noble fellow he is!" said the Doctor, looking admiringly at him.

"He is a perfect old darling!" Margaret exclaimed with smiling animation. "I think everything of him, for he is almost human. Don't you think it is a dreadful thing, Doctor, to realize there is no Heaven for dogs or horses?"

"What reason have we for thinking there is not? To me all life is sacred, and every form of it a part of the same grand and perfect creation. And how

dare we, who cannot even explain life, be it ever so imperfect and poor, — how dare we presume to say what and where its end is to be? Take Fin, for instance: Why may we not share the Indian's belief — that when he goes to the happy hunting-grounds,

"'His faithful dog shall bear him company?'"

Margaret smiled approvingly; and he asked, "Did you never happen to consider how many times the Bible gives us good reason for thinking that horses are not incompatible with Heavenly surroundings?"

Her eyes widened with a look of pleased surprise.

"Does it? I never thought of it before." And she glanced at him rather wonderingly.

"Certainly it does. There were the horses that came down with the fiery chariot, to take away the prophet Elijah. And Saint John, in Revelations, tells of the different horses and riders he saw."

"Yes, I remember. And if we may dare to think of horses being there, then why not dogs? I am sure that dogs are as near to humanity as horses are; and both of them often show more of it than some people I have known. Yes, and intelligence, too."

"I should say so." The Doctor spoke with an emphasis suggesting personal experience, and that of a far from pleasant nature.

"Well," Margaret added smilingly, "I love horses and dogs so dearly that I should like to make some part of your creed my own."

"Why not all of it?"

The inquiry came so abruptly as to cause her to

look questioningly into his face. But, seeing the half-quizzical smile showing under his moustache, her eyes reflected it as she asked, "You aren't a Buddhist, are you, for, now that I think of it, you lived several years in India?"

"By no means." And his smile deepened. "Yet," he continued, now more soberly, "don't you know that Christians may learn many real, Christ-taught truths from much of the advanced philosophy and thought of the Orient? Buddhism itself is truly a religion of tolerance and humanity."

"I know very little of India or its religions," Margaret admitted frankly; "and somehow my childhood's idea of it has never entirely faded from my mind. I have always fancied it to be a great mass of coral, — red coral, growing, grass-like, over the land. I probably had this idea from the old hymn that tells about 'India's coral strand.' And then I always think of a lot of pious men and women marching around, with books in their hands, saving black people, who are on their knees to them, waiting meekly to be saved."

Doctor Jasper joined in her laugh. "You remind me of something Mrs. Bessly said the other day. She was telling of some lady who went abroad as a missionary, and paraded about among the heathen, holding a prayer book in one hand and a sun umbrella in the other, saving heathen souls."

They had reached the gate; and, at Margaret's invitation, he went in to sit with her under the trees.

CHAPTER III

SHE transferred the hat from her curly head to her lap, ruffling up her hair in a boyish fashion, as she loosened its flattened rings. Then for a moment or two she looked at Doctor Jasper with abstracted eyes, before she inquired, "Have you met any of the Harwoods yet?"

Before he could reply there came a cheery, "Helloa, my lad!" from an open doorway of the house; and a stout, elderly man — a combination of "old salt" and "gentleman of the old school," for he had the look of the one and the bearing of the other — crossed the stretch of lawn to where the two were sitting.

He waved a shapely brown hand to the Doctor by way of salutation; and the tone of his rich bass voice was of itself a caress, as, with "Helloa, my Peg!" he patted her cheek. Then, having seated himself in a capacious chair, he proceeded to make ready for use a long clay pipe, while he asked, glancing smilingly from one to the other, "What sort of a plot are you two hatching, that you look so solemn?"

Margaret laughed happily. "I was only asking Doctor Jasper if he had met any of the Harwoods; that was all."

"And I was about to answer that I had not," the Doctor added, as he took a long and very black cigar proffered by his host.

"Aye, aye, — Captain Jack Harwood! A fine man; a truly fine man he was. None finer can answer when Gabriel pipes all hands aloft."

"Papa Leslie!" exclaimed Margaret, as if in reproof at his nautical way of expressing serious things.

"Never mind, lass," he said, laughing at her. "It 's true; and if my way of putting it is wrong, you know I don't mean to be wicked."

Then, leaning back in his chair, he continued, "Whenever I hear the name of Harwood, it 's him I always think of first — Captain Jack. Ah, but he was a handsome lad, with the look of a young prince! When he and I started out on our first trip as twelve-year-old cabin boys, with old Floyd Stanley — 'Musky Dingo,' the boys called him — Jack Harwood had all the sailors looking after him as if he were a girl; and after a few days out, any one of them would have done as much for him as for his own sweetheart. Now there was old Jap, the darkey cook, who thought 'Captain Jack' (for they gave him the title then, the same as they do his little grandson) should n't eat what most cabin boys had to put up with. And so we fared as never cabin boys did before aboard ship; for Jack would never touch a dish that was n't filled for two. He was always generous, as boy or man; and they used to say he 'd give away his head if it had n't been spliced to his shoulders. And deviltry — he was chock-full of it."

The Captain leaned back in his chair, and began to chuckle and shake in a way possible only to stout men who laugh inwardly.

The clay pipe having been lit, was now placed between the laughing, clean-shorn lips, and clenched firmly by the white teeth.

Doctor Jasper was about to speak of the boy — little Captain Jack — he had seen that morning, but was checked by Margaret inquiring if he would not like to go with her some day to call upon a few of the old people in the town.

"Now there's Miss Toxie, for instance," she began, when her father exclaimed: —

"What — Sarah Abigail?" And he began to chuckle once more.

This led the Doctor to inquire who she might be.

"She used to be a 'school-marm' when papa was a boy," answered Margaret. "She is a quaint old lady, and seems to like to have me come and see her occasionally. She makes knitted dolls and animals, for stores, and all sorts of odd things, which she sells. She is past seventy, but is so industrious as to often make me feel ashamed of myself for being so idle."

"Peg — Pegaway mine; avast there, my lass," her father said reproachfully.

"Well, she does, Papa. And she never tires of telling me what a nice boy you were; although she says you were much given to mischief."

"Aye, aye; that was so, — especially the last part of it," the Captain admitted. "But how time softens and changes all things, to be sure. Now I doubt if

she could count the doses of her 'kertholerker' she has given me."

"Her — what?" There was so much astonishment in the Doctor's voice and wide-opened eyes, that Margaret and her father laughed.

Then the Captain explained: "Why, you see, that was the name she had for it; and I never met the word anywhere else, in all my voyagings by sea and land. She was a cantankerous old maid when I was a lad, for she had inherited a rich supply of 'pepper,' in the shape of temper, from her father, old Deacon Toxie. She wanted to discipline the boys in her own fashion, and stopped at nothing to carry her point.

"This 'kertholerker,' as she called it, was her sceptre. It was a common clothes-pin sewed up in red flannel, and sprinkled with cayenne pepper. 'Now, boys,' she would say, 'if you don't behave yourselves, I shall have to get my kertholerker.' And then, if we did n't behave, down our little throats the 'kertholerker' would be poked."

"She does n't look now as if she could ever have thought of doing such a thing," said Margaret.

"Does n't she, my dear?" her father asked. "Burnt out, I should say she was, like an extinct volcano. And I remember well how 'burnt out' my poor throat used to feel from the 'kertholerker' treatment."

He gave his pipe a few double-quick puffs to keep it going, and then went on in a reminiscent way, "The old Deacon was a great character; that is, after his own peculiar fashion. He was a shin-

ing light in the Methodist Church here, and — as the old women say — 'a forlorn hope of a man as ever was.' I remember that when the small-pox epidemic was with us he would get this off about every Sunday."

The Captain rose from his chair, and spreading his hands out in front of him, looked down into the upturned faces of an imaginary audience, while he intoned, in a most ridiculously nasal twang, —

"One o' this con-gre-ga-tion,
Hevin' a near re-la-tion
Under the o-pe-ra-tion
O' sufferin' in-oc-u-la-tion,
Desires prayers."

He sat down, mopped his face, and resumed his pipe, looking pleased at his guest's unrestrained mirth.

"I have n't laughed so much in a month," said the Doctor, as he rose to go.

"It will do you good," his host declared emphatically. "Never forget the old saying, my lad, —

"'Care to our coffin adds a nail, no doubt;
But every grin so merry draws one out.'

And the more of them we can draw out, the better, say I. And that reminds me to tell you to be sure and report here for church and dinner tomorrow."

"And perhaps we can go and call on Miss Toxie afterwards," Margaret added.

Leaving the Captain and his daughter under the trees, Doctor Jasper walked back a part of the way

he and Margaret had come. Then he turned off into what was little more than a lane, with houses along one side of it, their windows looking out toward an old wharf, and a rising headland, partly rock and partly grass, while beyond these stretched the sea.

The largest, and what was known as the "smartest" of these houses belonged to his landlady, Mrs. Bessly, a bustling, thrifty widow with jetty hair, beady black eyes, an odd, protruding forehead, and a profile like a hickory nut.

She was a woman of many and diversified mannerisms, one of the most marked being a curious trick of twirling her thumbs, one over the other, as she talked. And talking was something she did incessantly, with a rush that made the listener feel inclined to breathe for her.

Indeed, like the heroine of one of our popular writers, Mrs. Bessly might be said to "rain the nine parts of speech for forty days and forty nights."

It was she herself who now let the Doctor in, after keeping him waiting while she unfastened the door. It was always kept locked, as were nearly all the other front doors in town, this one being so rarely opened that it did so in a shuffling, hesitating way, as if remonstrating at the disturbance of its rest. And when at length Mrs. Bessly accomplished her task, she peered out for a moment, holding fast to the door, before admitting her lodger.

Then, as he came in, she began, in her characteristic manner, "Oh, Doctor, be it you? It 's goin' to rain, d 'ye know. An' I 'm so glad, an' Eph ain't.

But it 's too bad for Eph, for he 's jest got the last coat o' paint on his new dory this very arternoon, an' now he 's got to cover it as best he can. But o' course the paint 's bound to be streaky-like. An' Eph 's been up town for the letters, an' there 's one I put on your bureau." But she pronounced it "bee-u-ree."

Her words ended in almost a shriek; for as Doctor Jasper mounted the stairs her voice had risen with him, until he turned from her sight at the landing above.

Here stood a handsome old mahogany desk, upon the top of which was a life-size plaster bust of General Cass, purchased years before at an auction sale.

In the dim, greenish light of the always darkened hall, the gallant General looked even more stern and gloomy-browed than in life. But, as though to relieve his sombreness of aspect, there was around his neck, and dangling low upon his manly bosom, an improvised necklace, composed of several dried starfish attached to a piece of string. This gave him a somewhat volatile appearance, and one altogether at variance with his reputation; and the effect was not lessened by the many pink conch shells surrounding him upon all sides.

One framed picture hung upon the wall. It was — in its way — a wondrous thing, — some rather wormy-looking trees, and a stream, spanned by an impossible bridge, and then disappearing in what was probably intended to be a mass of clouds. All this was worked in gray and dirty-green worsteds, on silver cardboard; and under it was the plaintive

question, in letters marvellous as to curls and twirls, "Shall We Gather At The River?"

A window at the farther end of the hall, over the stairs, was open; and the wind was beginning to sound through the slats of the closed blinds in a way to confirm Mrs. Bessly's promise of a shower.

Directly opposite this window, was the door of Doctor Jasper's room; and as he opened it, an extra gust of wind sent the loose papers flying from his table like a flock of startled birds.

Making haste to close the door — man-fashion, by pushing his shoulders against it — he crossed the cool, darkened room, and threw open the blinds of the two windows looking directly out toward the sea.

On the wharf some fishermen were lounging and smoking, as indeed fishermen might be found doing any day, and all day, — talking of the war, of fishing prospects, and kindred topics. In the harbor, and out on the water, large and small craft could be seen scudding homeward; and along the headlands, the tall grasses swaying in the rushing blast seemed beckoning them to their moorings.

CHAPTER IV

DOCTOR JASPER gathered the papers and restored them to the table, taking the precaution to secure them by a paperweight in the shape of a large, grandfatherly-looking volume, marked on the back, "Burton's Anatomy of Melancholy." Then, having lit a cigar, he took the letter from its conspicuous place upon his "bee-u-ree," and sat down by the window.

An expression the very reverse of pleasurable came to his face as his eyes fell upon the handwriting, and he sighed impatiently. The letter said: —

"DEAR NOEL, — Why will you persist in being so entirely unlike other brothers? I often think of Mama's high ambitions for you, and wonder what she would have said of all your 'outlandish notions,' as Aunt Stanton calls your preference for cutting people up, and feeding them on pills and powders; to say nothing of burying yourself in unheard-of parts of the earth, instead of sitting about in civilized garments, in civilized places, with our own set.

"The Russels have joined us here; and Auntie says it will be gross neglect upon your part if you do not devote some weeks of your 'vacation,' as you call it, to us. Marston was telling us of your writing him about setting that old sailor's legs, or arms, last week; or was it his ribs that were out of proper working order? And you gave this as an excuse for not running up to that last dinner-party of ours, just before we left.

"Now don't bury yourself alive all summer in that horrid little place where I am told they have pie three times a day, and dinner and dessert all spread out upon the table at the same time, with manners and garments to match. Join us here, won't you, before we leave for Newport? We are pining for your society, and Annie Russel is prettier than ever. The English nabob has followed the Russels here, and is Annie's faithful shadow, although Philips tells me — *sub rosa* — that he has already proposed, and been rejected.

"How you can let your best interests drift away from you so is more than I can understand. You are thirty-eight years old, and it is your positive duty to settle down as a married man, although I realized long ago that you were incapable of loving any one. But Annie is an unusually sweet and lovable girl. And besides, she has family, and fortune, — two things well worth considering, whatever you may say.

"Between ourselves, you must have seen what I have known for two years; and so you have only to speak. I would sooner have her for a sister than any other girl I know.

"Now you will come, won't you; if you do not, I shall really be tempted to wonder if some fisherman's daughter in that desolate little place by the sea may not, after all, have taken you captive. And I may think other uncharitable things, which you invite by being so queer, and so unlike the rest of us.

"Your devoted sister,

"MARIAN."

Doctor Jasper started impatiently from his chair, and with a sharp exclamation of disgust, half stifled by the cigar between his teeth, began tearing the

letter into small bits, when he heard a vigorous pounding of knuckles upon the outside of his door.

He had scarcely time to answer when it was opened with a bang, and Mrs. Bessly seemingly flew in, accompanied by a rush of wind that made the edges of the papers under Burton's ponderous work curl and flutter frantically.

"Land-sakes!" she exclaimed. And turning quickly about, she ran across the hall and charged wildly at the open window, which, as usual, refused to budge, even after she twisted the old-fashioned button which held it in place, and pulled at it until her florid face bloomed anew.

It remained stubborn. But she doubled her goodly-sized fist, and fell upon the refractory sash with sledge-like blows, until at length it yielded, and she brought it down with a vicious slam, as if it were an enemy overcome.

"Now, then!" she gasped, but in a tone of triumph, as she turned again and entered the room from which Doctor Jasper had been watching her through the open door.

"Now, then!" she repeated. "It 's jest hateful, the way winders an' doors stick, if ye let 'em stay in one fix for awhile. They seem to git settled-like, in a way o' their own, an' bound they 'll keep so till the end o' time, jest like some folks."

She ran the folds of her apron over her red face, and made a curious sniffling noise, as if some unseen power might be tickling her nose with an invisible feather. Then, dropping the apron, she clasped her hands and began twirling her short fat thumbs.

"I was down to Mary-Alice's this arternoon, Doctor, an' she was worryin' some over the baby. I don't think it 's nothin' but teeth. Miss Shales was there, an' she said so, too; Bixby Shales's widder, ye know, thet ye gev sumthin' to for thet queer stummick-ache she got one night last week. Ye remember her comin' in here an' settin' by my kitchin stove, an' sayin' to me, 'Miss Bessly,' says she, 'did ye ever hev a pain — an awful pain,' she says, 'in yer chest, low down, an' not jest yet in yer stummick, thet sort o' ached clean through to yer backbone?' An' says I, 'No, Betsey, I don't b'lieve I ever did. But if I was you, I 'd jest let me go upstairs an' ask Doctor Jasper if he can't give ye somethin' thet 's soothin' for sech a pain.' An' she was a-sayin' to me this very arternoon thet the stuff ye gev her jest ironed thet pain out as smooth as satin for her thet self-same night. An' Miss Shales 'greed with me 't was teeth was the matter with Benny; Benny 's the name o' the baby, ye know. An' now here 's thet Florence boy downstairs, the little one they call 'Sparrer-legs,' an' 'Wind-legs,' 'cause he 's *thet* thin-legged; an' Mary-Alice wants to know if I would n't beg ye to step in an' tek a look at Benny 'fore night sets in, for she 's *thet* worried. Oh, ye will, won't ye now? I was sure ye would. An' ye must tek yer umbrell', for I 'm sure ye 'll hev somethin' more 'n wind to come home in. I 'll hev supper ready 'gainst the time ye git back, so don't tek up nowhere else."

She was gone before he could speak; and as he started to take out his storm-coat he heard an em-

phatic thump in the hall below, proclaiming her arrival at the bottom of the stairs.

A few minutes later, as he opened the side door to go forth to the anxious Mary-Alice, his ears were assailed by the sound of rattling stove-covers from the kitchen; and then Mrs. Bessly's voice was raised in song, as she demanded to know —

> "Why should we mourn departed friends,
> Or quake at Death's alar-r-rums?"

The gusts of wind that came sweeping down rent the ragged clouds moving eastward; and over the sea was a rush of gold-brown glory from the hidden sun. But other and swiftly-moving black clouds were rapidly bringing up the storm that on the farthest hills to the south was already showing in "a fringe of rain;" and the cooled air smelled of parched earth, wetted.

Mary-Alice lived in a small frame building whose architecture — or lack of it — reminded one of the toy "Noah's Ark" of childhood's days. Like all its near-by fellows, it faced the sea, and, from its dooryard, steps led down to a platform where were fastened several dories, the property of shiftless Bob Russel, the decidedly worse-half of Mary-Alice.

Every morning, in the gray dawn, Bob Russel (known to his familiars as "Dizzy Heave-Ho") rowed out to his lobster pots or fishing nets; his objective point being determined by whichever edible he might have orders for from the families he supplied. Every afternoon, with similar regularity, he was in bed, dreadfully sea-sick, — a weakness

from which he derived his nickname. And whatever rest and quiet failed to accomplish in allaying his discomfort, whiskey was certain to bring about before evening.

He was a man of forty odd years; and for twenty of them this thing had gone on with such regularity that his friends long ago ceased to speak of it jokingly. For that "Dizzy Heave-Ho" should go out in his boat every morning, to return, sea-sick, at noon, and then go to bed, — all this had come to be as much a matter of course as was the rising of the sun.

He now stood leaning against the open doorway of his house, — a little, dried-up man, in nondescript clothing of a color like the leaves and grass in November; and he greeted Doctor Jasper with a short, quick nod, keeping his hands in his pockets, and scarcely removing his eyes from his two children, who were near the door, cleaning fish.

One of them was a tall, lanky girl, with tow-like hair flying all about her face and neck; the other an enormously fat boy with sleek black hair. And as the Doctor came near, the girl was saying, "An' *you* said I was cryin'; an' I wa'n't not!"

Before the boy could reply, his father called out in no gentle tones, "Here you, Tom, an' you, Sary-Ellen, — ye 'd better be scuttlin' over thet. Ther rain 'll come down soon, an' then ye 'll ketch suthin' ter cry for."

"It looks as if we were going to get some weather," the Doctor remarked, as, in response to

the suggestive waggle of Bob's dirty thumb toward the open door, he stepped into the house.

"Time we did," said Bob, coming far enough to look inside, and then retreating hastily, as a thinner, taller, and younger edition of Mrs. Bessly came from another room and greeted the Doctor.

A gray shawl was over her head and shoulders; and this partially covered the puny, weazen-faced baby she held upon one arm.

"I don't guess it 'll hurt the baby, if I *did* tek him out jest now, for all he looks like the little end o' nothin', whittled out to a p'int," she said, in a nasal, high-pitched voice. "Ye see, Doctor, he won't set nowheres an' let me leave him; an' this hull place looks as if the Devil hed held an auction here, an' hed n't sold nothin'. I 've hed Sary-Ellen hang out our best-room carpet this mornin' in the sun. It hed got moths in it; an' how, the land knows! An' I hed to fetch it in 'fore the storm come."

Now that she paused, Doctor Jasper looked at the ailing Benny.

He found that Mrs. Bessly and the Widow Shales had been correct in ascribing the trouble to "teeth." But the preternaturally old face, the glittering eyes, and abnormally large head of the infant, presaged far graver developments in the near future.

"I thank ye kindly for comin'," the mother said, when he had told her the result of his examination and given her a few simple directions to follow. "I wanted Bob to go for ye earlier," and she raised her voice, so that it might reach him of whom she spoke,

as he lounged outside; "but, as is ever the case with me or the children, 'want was the master.' I was *thet* mortified, an hour back, 'cause Miss Loleta hed to come herself, with Mammy Zabette behind her with a basket, for them lobsters Madam Harwood hed ordered; an' thet lazybones never told me a word about 'em."

Her husband, now feeling called upon to defend himself, began to expostulate in a whining voice from outside the door, but taking care to remain beyond the reach of her vision.

"Look here, Mary-Alice, ye know I was in bed. An' I laid out ter git 'em up there in plenty o' time myself; only I did n't wake up."

"Yes, ye did," replied Mary-Alice scornfully; "an' ye might hev knowed thet folks like them don't calc'late to wait till dark for orders thet 's to be filled for tea. But yer head grows more an' more like a barnacle ev'ry day ye live. It 's nothin' but a cracklin' shell, clean through, with nothin' in it to think with. Miss Loleta, — she was so sweet an' smilin'-like, thet I felt all the more 'shamed. Most folks would hev jest started an' raised cummins, so they would."

"Oh, come now," he remonstrated, his pipe of a voice getting a little more of a growl in it. "Ye 're mekin' an everlastin' rumpus 'bout not much o' nothin'."

"Not much o' nothin'!" his wife repeated shrilly. "Well, when ye git no more orders from Madam I 'm thinkin' ye may — "

But here Doctor Jasper intervened by speaking of

the child he had seen that same day, and asked if he was Madame Harwood's only grandson.

"Oh, little Cap'n Jack," Mrs. Russel answered in a much milder tone, and smoothing the scanty locks upon her baby's head, as he lay, with half-closed eyes, along her arm. "Yes, the only one; an' a blessed one he is. Miss Loleta 's the only gran'-daughter. A beauty she is, a perfect beauty; but she 's never one thet 's foolish with her good looks. Lots o' young men in this town goes to meetin' early, on purpose to see her come in. Ye 've seen her, I s'pose?"

"Not that I am aware of," he replied.

"Well then, ye hev n't, surely; for any one seein' Loleta Harwood would be 'ware of it to their dyin' day, 'specially if they was men-folks. But there, — the Harwoods do keep so to theirselves thet it 's no wonder, not livin' here long, ye 've not seen her. They go to the 'Piscopal Church; thet is, the children do, when they go anywheres. The old Madam ain't been seen in a church this many a year. Oh, land-sakes! *What* a flash!"

She held the baby closer, as there came another blinding flash, followed by the rattle and roar of thunder. Then the rain poured down in a pelting rush that sent Sary-Ellen and Tom flying with the fish and cleaning paraphernalia, giggling as they ran to find shelter.

Bob Russel stepped within the doorway, and standing with his back to the room, remarked sententiously, as he shook the ashes from his pipe, "Well, — it 's come."

"Yes," the Doctor said with a smile; "and I must go."

"Wait a bit," remonstrated Mary-Alice. "It 'll hold up, I guess."

But he was prepared for the rain, and, declining her invitation, went his way.

CHAPTER V

AS the Doctor walked hurriedly along the shore he noticed the "Pretty Sally" moored by the wharf. Her canvas was snugged, and the elder Ayres — looking, in his yellow oil-skins, much like an animated smoked ham — fussing about something aboard.

Uncle Billy was coming up the wharf steps, with a rubber garment huddled about his head and shoulders in a way to have made his identity doubtful to such as were not familiar with his short legs; and from a piece of stout twine held in his hand dangled several codfish, with their tails trailing along like the gowns of fine ladies.

He was shouting in his foghorn-like voice to some one unseen, but evidently within one of the many buildings along by the wharf, "Nobody but er fool would put up sail ter be blowed ter rags outside o' harbor, ef'n he was all snug an' safe inside o' one."

Then, seeing the Doctor, he greeted him with a hoarse salutation, which the latter returned as he passed along and hurried to the house.

He let himself in by the side door; and while on his way to the kitchen, to hand his dripping coat to Mrs. Bessly, he heard her voice, raised loud in rapturous exclamation.

"Oh, the lovin's! My precious jewel, but yer feet is soakin'. An' what 'll yer gran'ma be thinkin' all this time, but thet ye 're in a wat'ry grave, or sailin' over one. But Eph 'll soon tek that off'n her mind, when he gits up there to tell her."

As Doctor Jasper entered the kitchen, he saw, sitting in a chair close to the stove, the little lad, Captain Jack. And before him on her knees was Mrs. Bessly, drawing a pair of huge yarn stockings over his small white feet, from which she had evidently just removed the dampened black silk hose and steel-buckled shoes now in front of the fire.

The child glanced up shyly at the big man who stood in the doorway looking down with kindly eyes from his six feet of height. Then his face flushed, as Mrs. Bessly, whose back was to the Doctor, kissed his little bare legs, gleaming white as alabaster.

"Gold an' silver, an' all things precious, so he is! By the time we hev tea, yer shoes an' stockin's 'll be dry as tinder; an' then Eph 'll carry ye home. An I should n't wonder ef'n the rain held up by thet time. But anyhow, ye must wait till yer shoes an' stockin's be dry-like."

Captain Jack looked smilingly into her good-natured face.

"I don't reckon I could run far up the street with these on," he said, holding up one foot for inspection, clad as it was in Eph's stocking. And then came that same sweet laugh that had struck upon Doctor Jasper's ear when Sam Ayres caught the boy up and carried him down the rocks, a few hours before.

He could not resist joining in it; and this caused Mrs. Bessly to turn around so quickly that she nearly lost her balance. But, recovering herself by a violent effort, she arose and faced about.

"So ye're back! An' oh, land-sakes, let's tek yer coat, Doctor Jasper. An' 't *was* teeth, wa'n't it? An' I said so. But there, I'm so glad ye went, for Mary-Alice'll b'lieve what ye tell her; an' she's so clean beat out these days with work, it's no need to add 'worry to weary.' An' *ain't* this a shower, though? I've sent Eph up to tell Madam Harwood that Uncle Billy brought Cap'n Jack to me all bundled up in rubber, dry ez dry. Only the precious started to walk, an' got his feet an' legs splashed-like. He's jest the tender thing, so he is; an' he loves his old Bess, don't he? An' I'm jest goin' to hev ye set in the front room 'long with Doctor Jasper, till me an' Jane gits tea on the table."

As she paused to take breath, the Doctor hurried upstairs, to make such changes of apparel as the day's happenings had rendered needful. And when he came down a few minutes later, he found Captain Jack alone in the front room, sitting on the horse-hair-covered sofa, his small legs, with the yarn stockings, under him, Turk fashion.

He was looking at a scrap-book, — one that had been begun by Mrs. Bessly in her girlhood, or, at all events, many years ago.

The binding was of flowered wall-paper and faded green ribbons. And inside was a motley and grotesque collection of woodcuts, most horrible to an

artistic eye; newspaper clippings relative to divers (and mostly sentimental) subjects; some poems, written in ink, — evidently original autographic efforts of Mrs. Bessly's companions and acquaintances; cards of invitation to weddings and other festive occasions, some of them brave with silver edgings, and with bow-knots of the same in the upper corners.

As Doctor Jasper entered the room, Captain Jack looked up at him very soberly from under his black-fringed lids; then, nodding his small head toward the book, he said, "I s'pose you could read all this."

"Why, yes; can't you?" the Doctor replied with equal gravity, as he seated himself by the child, while marvelling at his great beauty, and thinking it was a pity he was not a girl.

"No-o; not much. I can read some things, though." Then, pointing to one of the pages, "This one does look like something so very nice that I do wish I could read what it says."

The Doctor looked closer, and saw some straggling branches of leaves and coral, done with pen and ink, and framing a poem, executed with many flourishes of chirography. At the end of the verses was drawn a mermaid, and at the top of them was another, suggesting the

"Sweet little Cherub, sitting up aloft."

"Shall I read it for you?" he asked, his face as solemn as that of a theologian.

"Oh, if you please." And the child, nestling

more closely, fixed his luminous eyes upon the man's handsome profile, and clasped his small hands in an expectant way, as the book was drawn gently from his lap.

TO MISS SUSAN ABORN

A SAILOR'S EPITAPH

In Life's hard bustle, o'er the troubled seas,
Through many a gateway, and many a prosperous breeze,
Through summer's heat, and winter's chilling blast,
From torrid to the frigid zone I 've passed, —
Through sickly climes, where each contagious breath
Spreads desolation by untimely death.
One hundred voyages, through unnumbered toils,
I 've sailed, — at least five hundred thousand miles;
Been taken, sunk, and oftentimes cast away;
Yet weathered all, in this close port to lay,
Where a safe rest my wretched bark hath found,
Obliged to anchor for the want of wind.
And here at rest I doubtless shall remain
Till the last trump calls up all hands again.
What further perils I shall then go through
No human foresight ever yet could show.
But doubtless He who led through earth and sea
Will doubtless lead me through Eternity.

When Doctor Jasper came to the end his eyes sought Captain Jack's face.

"What does it all mean?" the child demanded, knitting his smooth brows. And in his wondering interest he carelessly uncoiled his legs, and was obliged to clutch hastily at his companion's arm to save himself from sliding off the slippery sofa.

"I think it means that whoever wrote it wanted to

say something pretty, and did n't quite know how to do it."

The Doctor's lips twitched a little as his eyes retraced the line — so quaintly suggestive of apprehension for the future —

"What further perils I shall then go through."

"Are you smiling at it?" the child asked quickly. "It did make me to feel, when you read it, like when the wind sounds in the rigging of a boat; the same way it will sound in keyholes, and down chimneys. Uncle Billy says it is 'sailors' sighs.'"

The Doctor looked with greater interest at the sensitive little face as he asked, "What does Uncle Billy mean by that?"

"Why, dead sailors, you know. He says they do make sighs like that, when they have a chance to, to let us hear them. Coming home this afternoon, they did sigh like everything; and I did wish I could let them know I was sorry for them. That was you, was n't it," he added, speaking with more animation, while the dreaming look left his eyes, "sitting on the rocks, when Sam did take me down to the boat?"

"Yes. Did you have a fine sail?"

"Oh, yes!" He clasped his hands again, with an eagerness that imperilled his equilibrium, so that he was compelled to clutch once more at the Doctor's arm. And this time it went around the little form, and remained there.

Noel Jasper was a man not easily impressed; for although his nature was not lacking in consideration

for his fellows (and this took a tender form toward some of them — those who appealed to his sympathies), yet his affections lay deep, and were entirely distinct from the sentiments and impulses likely to affect most men possessed of this same almost womanish tenderness.

He had travelled much, and had always been a close student, both of books and human kind. And the result had been to make him, at times, and with a sort of regret, feel that he had but little in common with the people and affairs of this "day and generation."

He was neither a cynic, nor yet a pessimist; he had too much spirituality and faith, — too much humanity, to belong to either class. He was simply indifferent, willing to let the world go its way, and desiring to pursue his own, free from its obligations and exactions. He felt somehow that he was living at the wrong time, either too soon, or else too late; and he found it impossible to bring himself into anything like close touch with the people and affairs constituting the world about him. He seemed to have discovered its — taken as a whole — insincerity and hollowness; to have probed the motives which influence so great a part of its doings. And while he found a few individual exceptions to the generality of its people — and these he appreciated all the more because of their rarity — he was much like one who, witnessing a play from behind the scenes, sees the glaring paint and flimsy pasteboard, the paste and pinchbeck, — all the pretence and sham that appear solid and real to those in front.

This being so, he found himself puzzled to account for the feeling already awakened within him by this boy, whom he had seen for the first time only a few hours before.

To be sure, little Captain Jack was a lovable child, — marvellously so, with his almost startling beauty and sweet voice; with his quaint manners, — his odd mingling of ingenuousness and dignity, of impulsiveness and gravity.

But there was more than this which had so quickly found the way to reach such unusual depths in Doctor Jasper's unimpressionable nature; something he was unable to fully understand, and could only accept as a fact. It was not only that the child was to him a revelation of innocent and sweet humanity, but he seemed to embody that which the man's heart had — but until now unknown to himself — missed, and needed.

This was why his strong arm held the little fellow so closely, and why his grave face took an unwonted expression as he looked down at the bright hair and lustrous eyes.

It may be that — so quick are the intuitions of childhood — some of this feeling made itself known to Captain Jack, for he gave a soft sigh of content, and snuggled close to his big friend.

"Tell me about your trip," the Doctor suggested. "Did you catch any fish?"

"Yes; I did catch two fish, but the first was only a pollock. And was not Uncle Billy *enragé* — angry, I mean! *Il était très*, — I mean," and the child spoke more slowly as he corrected himself in

a curiously stiff fashion, "he was so very — provoked. Sam Ayres had been for so long catching only pollock, and it was cod that Uncle Billy did want. And when I did catch my pollock, Uncle Billy did — bite its head off; and he did say that it should be an 'exarmple' to the other pollock. And I did think that perhaps it did make the others to go off, for we did catch no more pollock, but only cod."

Doctor Jasper smiled at the terrifying "exarmple," but made no comment; and the child went on, "I did see Miss Margot in her cave, under the rocks where you were waiting. Do you know Miss Margot?"

"Oh, yes. Do you?"

"Know her? Of course I do — right well. She does come to see Loleta, and sometimes we go to see her. And please do not let her know I did tell you, but" — in a whisper — "she is my sweetheart. I do love her best of any one I know, 'cept Loleta."

"Don't you think you are beginning rather young, my boy?" inquired the Doctor, somewhat taken aback, but trying not to smile.

"Huh?" And the child looked up with puzzled eyes.

"Don't you think Miss Margaret will beat you in growing, and that some big man will come and carry her away?"

"Oh!" in a tone of relief, "that was what you did mean?" Then, with entire confidence, "No, 'cause I will ask grandmère to plant me, like a flower; and I can grow up quick, and marry Miss Margot myself."

Doctor Jasper could not well help laughing at this odd conceit. But seeing a hurt look cloud the child's face, he bent and kissed the soft cheek as he asked, "What put such an idea as that into your head?"

Captain Jack looked up, his eyes filled with confiding affection.

"It was n't put there, for I did think of it while I did watch for some flowers to grow in our greenhouse; some that did come from far away, where we did live. They will not grow here, out of doors, grandmère does say; and it is because the wind from the sea does eat them up, if they show their heads above the ground. When the seeds were put into the dirt I did watch for them to come up. And they popped up so nice and green in such a little time, that I did think perhaps I could be planted in the dirt, and grow up quick. And then I would tell Miss Margot, so that she should watch for me, the same as I did watch the flowers."

"I think," said the Doctor, looking at him solemnly, "that you will have to get a fairy to make you grow up in the way the flowers do."

"A fairy?" And the child's eyes became wide-open. "But I think I do not like a fairy."

"Did you ever see one?"

"No. But Louis says they do have tails, and do bite."

"Louis! Who is Louis?" inquired the Doctor.

"He is a nigger. Zabette is his grandmère; and he can walk on his hands, and turn somersaults. He did promise to teach me how, and once he did

hold me, while I did try. And Zabette did box his ears, and did say grandmère would be *enragé*. But I think I will try again some day."

"And who is Zabette?"

"Zabette," the child repeated, looking up into the man's face as if wondering why any one should find it necessary to ask such a question. "Why, Zabette is — Zabette; that is who she is. She is my mammy, and she was Loleta's mammy; and she does brush grandmère's hair. And" — confidentially — "she does know why Loleta does wear a glass locket. And she does n't like her to wear it, for I did hear her beg Loleta to take it off; and once she did ask her to throw it away."

Doctor Jasper refrained from asking any more questions, for fear that Captain Jack might prattle of things better left unmentioned. But the child added, as he pointed to the raindrops fringing the outside of the window panes, "Those are like the things stuck into Loleta's locket. And she does sometimes look at it nights, and does sit so still, with her hands over her face, that I was afraid she was crying. But I knew she would not like me to ask her, and so I did n't."

The door was now thrust ajar rather gently; then, with decided emphasis, kicked wide open, and the blue print gown and carroty locks of Jane, Mrs. Bessly's niece, came through.

The girl's freckled hands were filled with dishes, upon which her eyes were fixed with keen watchfulness; and her aunt followed close behind, bearing a large, blue-flowered platter, heaped with crimson lobster.

The two burdens were borne to the table, and deposited carefully upon the expanse of snowy cloth, relieved by an occasional oasis of glass or china, and in whose centre stood, looming over all, a big glass pitcher, holding a small haystack of tiger lilies splashed with freckles almost rivalling those adorning Jane's small hands.

CHAPTER VI

THE shower was over, and some rays of pale sunlight struck sparkles from the polished tableware. The china was quaint, and spotless, and the glass was the commonest of common mould. But the homely cleanliness of everything was full of comfort.

Mrs. Bessly placed Captain Jack at her right hand, and bade Jane heap up his plate, while she herself began to pour the tea.

The room was soon filled with the fragrance of the steaming infusion, which was brewed from some of a carefully hoarded lot brought from China by Captain Aborn, Mrs. Bessly's eldest brother, dead now some two years since, and laid away in the well-kept plot where her husband was the only other tenant.

It was to this plot that the good woman went upon occasional Sundays, bearing two huge bouquets, made in a style peculiar to herself, and in the construction of which she took great pride. They were cone-shaped, the apex ending in a tuft of quivering grass, and the whole arrangement so unyielding that they might have been used as missiles without displacing a single flower.

Eph soon came to the table, and filled the only vacant chair. His hands were red, his face glowing, and his hair damp from recent ablutions.

Mrs. Bessly, always consistent in "tongue-tang" (as Uncle Billy called her flow of words), did the greater part of the talking, for the reason that Jane and Eph, from habit, and Doctor Jasper, from a keen enjoyment of quiet fun, permitted her to not only lead, but monopolize, the conversation.

"Eph," she said, "pass Doctor Jasper the lettuce" (pronouncing it "lettiss"). "It 's cool an' crisp, like it hed ought to be; an' it was all washed an' sparklin' with raindrops when I brought it in out'n the garden. An', Doctor, would n't ye like some o' these preserves? I put 'em up myself, ye know; an' I mind the day last fall thet I done it. September, it was, an' Hannah-Ellen Rounds hed come in to set a spell with me thet arternoon. She was beginnin' a new quilt. The brick-house pattern, it was; an' she was puttin' some pieces of her brother's pants into it. Reddy Florence, he was, an' called 'Wind-legs,' an' 'Sparrer-legs,' jest like his nephew, thet come here this arternoon from Mary-Alice. I mind I was thinkin', as I skimmed the preserves, — an' Hannah-Ellen set by, stitchin' away, — 't was lucky she wa'n't forced to mek her quilt out o' nothin' else but his pants, as 't would hev teken a few thousand pair for it. I mind how Uncle Billy took the wind out'n Reddy's sails once, when he was puttin' on airs, an' tryin' to tek Uncle Billy down a peg, jest to show-off afore some young lady cousins o' hisn from Boston. Reddy hed 'em out sailin'; an' when they come in, Uncle Billy was settin' on the wall, danglin' his stumpy legs over the water. An' Reddy says to him, 'If ye put yer legs

one atop the other, ye might 'most git into my boat.' An' says Uncle Billy, 'Yes, an' if ye feel so much consarned 'bout my legs, mebbe ye 'll lend me one o' yourn a minute, to clean out my pipe. I want somethin' to run through the stem, it draws so drattedly.'"

Jane, whose ideas of propriety were evidently shocked by the freedom with which her aunt mentioned certain members of the human body, looked up at her with what the good woman would have called a "wish" expression.

But Mrs. Bessly had again taken up the tale — if indeed she had dropped it — and was saying, "An' there Hannah-Ellen set, stitchin' away, an' tellin' me how the Widder Griggs hed gone south, somewhere, to the hospital, to nurse the last one she hed left of her hull lot o' good-for-nothin' boys. An' a good soul she was, never thinkin' a thought for her own comfort; an' her clothes, 'though gen'rally clean, *thet* torn an' worn thet she sort o' 'minded one o' the kings of Israel, in grief, when they were everlastin'ly rentin' — I mean rendin', their raiment. An' while she was talkin', the bell on the old Methodist Meetin' House begun to toll so solemn an' slow-like, it sort o' gev one the horrors. An' it did Hannah-Ellen, too. For we was jest lookin' at each other, never speakin', an' the tollin', tollin', o' thet bell (never a cheery one at the best o' times) went on soundin'. I felt like Job, I guess, when 'the hair of his flesh stood up.' I knew somethin' was 'up;' an' sure 'nough, the hull o' Kyles's new brick store, thet he was so proud of, was afire. An' it jest burnt to the ground."

She stopped to breathe. And Doctor Jasper took advantage of the opportunity to remark, "The town does n't indulge in many fires, I take it, judging by the rust and cobwebs I saw on the engine, as I passed the house yesterday morning, when the doors were standing open."

"Eph b'longs to that company," Jane announced timidly; and the young man added that he had joined it recently, to fill one of the vacancies left by the war.

"It 's been all soldierin' an' drillin' hereabouts, ye see, Doctor," he explained, "till the boys went away. An' now we 're pitchin' in to shine up things 'bout the town, the old engine 'mong the rest. We was airin' out the house yesterday, an' cleanin' up; that was the reason ye saw the door open. We calc'lated on finishin' the job to-day, but did n't; but we 'll surely do it to-morrer."

"To-morrer!" gasped Jane. And Mrs. Bessly, fixing her eyes upon Eph much as Macbeth might have stared at the ghost of murdered Banquo, exclaimed, "Ephraim Benjamin Bessly, to-morrer is the Sabbath!"

"Lawk, Ma, — so it is. Why, I 've clean lost a day."

"I should n't wonder," his mother assented with a grim smile; "for you 're everlastin'ly losin' somethin' or other."

Then her face took a look of alarm, as she arrested Captain Jack's hand on its way to his mouth.

"Here, my precious lamb, don't ye drink any milk with thet lobster ye 're eatin'; it 'll mek ye

sick *ez* sick. Now, Jane," turning to her niece, "what *air* ye thinkin' of, anyhow, to give him milk, when he 's eatin' lobster, with vinegar on it? Ye know how p'tic'lar Madam is 'bout sech things." Then again to the child, "Don't ye tech it, my precious."

Captain Jack only smiled as he put down the glass; and Mrs. Bessly gave her attention once more to Doctor Jasper.

"Hev another cup o' tea, Doctor? No? Well, there 's jest 'nough for another cup, an' I 'll tek it myself; for I never b'lieve in throwin' away any o' this tea. An' what I 'll do when it 's gone, as I 've no brother to bring it over the sea to me any more, I 'm sure I hate to think. Marm Ayres asked me to hev a cup o' tea one day last week, when I went to set with her awhile; an' any one might see she was in greatest distress with her rheumatiz thet day. An' land! No wonder she 'd be in some kind o' distress, drinkin' sech stuff! 'T was for all the world like dry hay an' some o' her old man's ter-backer mixed up an' b'iled together."

Captain Jack, who had been listening attentively, now spoke up.

"Mr. Ayres does like tea, too — cold tea. He does say so, and does always keep a big brown jug of it in the cuddy of the 'Pretty Sally;' and he does drink it ever so much."

"Humph!" Mrs. Bessly remarked, with significant emphasis, and actually winked at Doctor Jasper; while Eph laughed aloud.

"Yes, he does," the child insisted, as though his statement had been questioned.

Mrs. Bessly patted his shoulder. "O' course; we all know thet, my gold an' silver. An' for my part, I 'd sooner drink Sam Ayres's cold tea than his wife's hot stuff; 'though I could n't say I much admire either sort."

Eph, having finished, now arose to go. But as he was about to close the door, his mother bade him not to forget that after a while he was to take Captain Jack home.

"No danger o' my forgettin', when I promised Madam I 'd do it," the young man replied, thrusting his head through the doorway as a turtle might project that member from its shell.

"Well, no," said Mrs. Bessly reflectively, as the head disappeared. "Thet 's so, 'specially when there 's sech fair things to see at Madam's; an' I bet you hev a weakness for sech, jest like the rest o' yer crowd."

"What fair things has grandmère, for Eph to see?" inquired Captain Jack. He had finished eating, and his curly head was bent forward until his chin touched his chest, this being to assist Jane in untying the tapes that held his bib in place.

Mrs. Bessly did not reply until she had slowly brushed the crumbs from her capacious lap, and shook them into her plate.

"Why, flowers, o' course; all them lovely flowers. An' the place itself; it 's the fairest in town." Then, as the bib was being folded by Jane's deft fingers, she picked the child up in her arms and carried him to the sofa.

"Ye must ask our Doctor to come an' see ye," she

said; "an' then he 'll see how intrancin' the flowers be, an' the hull place, jest like a dream o' beauty. There, now, — do ye sit on the end o' thet sofy, an' I 'll be back in a minute or two with yer shoes. Then ye can trot around as much as ever ye like."

Going to the window, she raised the sash with a bang that shook off the shining drops outside, and startled a catbird from its seclusion in the thick growth of rose-bushes beneath.

"Now come, Jane," she said, facing about again, "let 's hev these dishes out'n the way. An' d' ye ketch surer holt on thet platter, or ye 'll send it to keep company with its mate, down in the pile at the foot o' the garden. Land-sakes!"

Her voice was lifted in dismay, as she glanced through the window looking toward the back of the house.

"Whatever *hez* brought them plagues o' chickens out at this time o' day? There 's thet old Sancho of a rooster, jest leadin' the way for his ladies, an' with the airs of a lord bishop, 'round to my flower bed; an' they 'll scratch it up like sixty. Jane, go an' shoo 'em back. But no, I 'll go myself, an' jest mek sure they 're locked in this time."

She hurried from the room with an emphatic tread that rattled the china ornaments, whales' teeth, and other sundries upon the "what-not." And shortly thereafter, loud and animated cacklings, mingled with the sound of her own voice, proclaimed the rout of the offending Sancho and his numerous family.

A soft rush of cooled breeze was now coming

through the opened window. And outside, a robin's song thrilled the air, as the bird rocked amid the dripping leaves of the one large tree — an elm — near the door.

Looking eastward, not a cloud was in sight; and a pleasant day for the morrow was promised by the glorious tints of sunset colorings that reached even to the horizon. The sky's opaline hues ran on and up, into a pale lemon, and that again into orange, until, reaching the zenith, the orange turned to glowing gold. And this, continuing down into the west, was merged in splendid liquid light, from which Venus sparkled like a diamond amid the laces of a bride.

But what Mrs. Bessly said to Jane, when she came into the kitchen, was: —

"It 's cleared off jest beautiful, with the air as sweet as fresh cream, an' the sky lookin' for all the world like as if the angels was blowin' soap-bubbles."

Doctor Jasper sat beside Captain Jack, looking out to the northeast, where Bramble Island lay upon the empurpled sea, the evening mists beginning to veil it bluely.

The child's eyes were meanwhile bent attentively upon the man's fine head and strong profile, showing as though set amid clouds of incense, as he sat smoking.

To most men and women it was an inscrutable face, its healthful paleness accentuated by the blue-black of the thick moustache, the heavy arched eyebrows, and the crisp waving hair that would break

into curling rings over the not high, but finely formed forehead.

There was a set, almost stern, look about the broad, rounded chin. And this was matched by the usually grave regard of the steadfast, wide-apart eyes, deeply shadowed by such long, curling lashes as are oftenest possessed by a child.

But there was nothing else about Doctor Jasper that was either childish or effeminate, although he was a remarkably handsome man. He was, and emphatically, a "manly-looking man," his head, face, and figure suggesting the ideal warrior of old crusading days. And no one who knew him could fail to be impressed by his innate knightliness.

Captain Jack presently attracted his attention by trailing a small finger along the muscular wrist and hand nearest him, as he said very softly, "I do like you so much."

The agate-hued eyes were turned from where the glories of the sunset lay spread; and as they rested upon the earnest, uplifted face, a smile stole into them, — a smile that warmed like the sun brightening through clouds.

The child felt the gentleness and tenderness of the man, and added, while he nestled still closer to him, "You do look like my soldier, in grandmère's room."

"Do I?" the Doctor said, removing the cigar from his lips. "And who is he?"

"He's a picture; grandmère does know his name, 'cause she says he was her 'ancestor.' Loleta does lift me up, when I like, to let me kiss him."

Then, with a sigh, "I do wish he was real, to kiss and to love. And I do wish that all of him was painted, and not only just his head. He was a soldier, like" — hesitatingly — "like Mrs. Bessly says you are. And oh," — in a low, awed voice — "did you ever kill anybody?"

CHAPTER VII

BEFORE Doctor Jasper could reply, the door was flung open, and Mrs. Bessly entered the room in her usual animated way. The long black silk stockings — now dry — were hanging across her arm; and two small shoes, held by her first and third fingers, seemed to advance of themselves, assuming what is known in dancing lessons as "The First Position."

The worthy woman, as was her wont, sent her voice before her.

"Here they be, all nice an' dry, my precious; an' Eph 's waitin' to tek ye home pick-a-back. An' so ye 'll keep 'em so, for the streets is swimmin'. Ain't the sunset lovely, Doctor Jasper?"

With this she went down on her knees, and began drawing the yarn socks from the child's feet.

He watched her a moment, and then turned to look out of the window. But his eyes soon came back to Doctor Jasper's face, as he said, "The sky and water all around Bramble Island do look like gold. Don't you s'pose Saint Brandon's fairy island must look like that?"

Mrs. Bessly gazed at him in silent wonder. But the Doctor asked, "How do you happen to know anything about Saint Brandon's island, my young friend?"

"Oh, Miss Margot did tell me; and Loleta did read to me of it." And a far-away look came to his eyes as he added, "Often I do wonder if there are any 'water-babies' out there in the ocean."

"Well, — cummins!" gasped Mrs. Bessly, in amazement. Then, the first little shoe being in place, she fell upon its steel buckle with her gathered-up apron, and began polishing it vigorously.

Captain Jack puckered his brows, and looked inquiringly at the Doctor.

"I did ask Uncle Billy about it one day, and he said, 'No doubt a heap of 'em.' But I did hear Mr. Ralph, the minister's son, who was here last summer, say to Uncle Billy that he was not to tell me such 'stuff.' And after that, when I did ask Uncle Billy, he only laughed, and did tell me to wait till I was a man, and sort my knowledge 'cordin' to my size."

Both shoes being on, the child had slidden down to the floor, and now tried to imitate Uncle Billy's slow, rumbling tones, while he put his small fists into his pockets, and screwed up his face in a futile effort to make his frank young eyes take a semblance of the old sailor's shrewd little optics.

As Mrs. Bessly struggled to her feet, Jane came in with Captain Jack's hat, and announced that Eph was waiting for him.

"Won't you come to see me again?" the Doctor asked, laying a caressing hand on either side the winsome face, and smiling into the upturned eyes.

"O' course he will," Mrs. Bessly answered for him. "He comes here often, 'cause he knows that

his old Bess could n't live without him." And catching his head in her goodly-sized hands, she leaned over to kiss him.

But he laughingly evaded her, and came closer to the Doctor.

"Do you truly want me to come and see you?" he asked eagerly. "Then you will come and see me, won't you? I 'd like to show you my fishes, that do live in a pond, in grandmère's green-house; and my monkey, Topaz, and Bijou, my parrot. He does n't like any one 'sides Loleta and me. Won't you surely come?"

Doctor Jasper nodded, still smiling into the pleading little face; and in response to the whispered, "Put your ear down," he bent his head. A soft cheek was pressed against his own, and he heard, — scarcely uttered, — "I do love you!"

Before he could reply to this sweet confidence, Captain Jack snatched his hand and kissed it. Then he dashed out of the room.

A minute later, Eph passed the window, with the lad perched upon his shoulder. And Doctor Jasper heard a startled exclamation, followed by a childish laugh, as Mrs. Bessly, thrusting a portion of her person out of the window, screamed lustily, "Eph, — Eph, ye 'll git the child soaked, stickin' him into them lilacs! Jest look sharp, now, will ye?"

She drew herself hastily inside the room, and giving utterance to a profound sigh, collapsed, so to speak, into a low-backed rocking-chair, and smoothed her apron down with a few business-like strokes.

Having done this, she commenced a vigorous

rocking, accompanied by the inevitable twirling of her thumbs.

But, strange to say, it was Doctor Jasper who spoke first.

"Mrs. Bessly, how comes this little Captain Jack by his strong French accent, and his odd way of speaking English?"

"Well, ye see, Doctor," she began, glad to talk once more, "ye see he's some French, — more 's the pity. His gran'father, old Cap'n John Harwood, thet 's been dead an' buried this many a year, was as fine a man as ever trod the streets o' this town, or any other, I 'm thinkin'. But he was *thet* headstrong an' hot-headed, an' his sisters (they 're all dead an' gone) was *thet* proud! When he wrote home thet he 'd married a creole, down somewhere in Louisiana, they was hoppin', I tell ye. They was mad clean through; 'cause, ye see, they thought 't was a nigger he 'd married. But o' course 't was 'cause she b'longed to one o' them old French fam'lies down there. An' if John Harwood's sisters was proud, they soon found their pride wa' n't a drop in the bucket 'longside o' Madam Harwood's. Not thet I 'm misnamin' her, — land forbid! For if she don't never set her foot inside o' church or Dorcas meetin', an' if there 's some in town as calls her proud an' hard, not one of 'em ever heerd of her turnin' a beggar 'way from her door. Poor an' needy folks flock to her like crows to a corn-field."

"And so she is of French extraction," the Doctor remarked; "and the boy must be accustomed to speaking French."

"As to thet," said Mrs. Bessly, who had recovered her breath, "Cap'n Jack can rattle away like Johnny Crapaud himself, to beat the Dutch. But Madam likes him, so she says, to talk our own lingo best, though to be sure she an' Loleta oftenest speak to him in French, an' they are everlastin'ly rattlin' away to one another in French. They set a heap by each other — them three, Madam, Loleta, an' the child. They don't seem to care much for anybody else's company. Madam never hed but one child of her own, an' he was Jack Harwood, — named for his father. She sent him away, down 'mong her own folks, to be brought up, when he wa' n't more 'n five years old; an' she 's been always mostly off to furrin countries with her husband."

"Then she has never spent much of her time here," suggested the Doctor, who found himself quite interested in the story.

"No; when they wa' n't in furrin parts, o' late years, they was with her own folks, down in Louisiana an' Cuba. Her son grew up, an' married, an' died, down there; an' all o' Cap'n Harwood's folks was dead afore thet. He died, too, right arter his son; the same sort o' fever carried 'em both off. Then Madam come up here for a spell, jest long enough to sort o' settle up things at the old Harwood place; an' then the house was shet up for another spell. Old Goody Farren lived in it, with her good-for-nothin' old man, both of 'em deef as beetles, an' kept the place. An' less 'n four years ago Madam come back, — bag an' baggage, this time. All her folks was gone, an' she hed her

son's children with her — a girl in her teens, with a face thet 's turned more 'n half the boys' heads in town, an' little Cap'n Jack. Now Loleta ain't in no ways foolish with her good looks, an' she 's ever a kind word for everybody. But for all thet, she 's got a good mite o' thet sort o' queenliness, jest like Madam. It 's a sort thet meks folks feel sometimes thet, for all her winnin' ways, she thinks most folks dirt under her feet."

She stopped; and the continued rotary movement of her thumbs brought to Doctor Jasper the thought that perhaps this had some connection with her mental processes, and that she might be winding herself up. But he did not think there could be much more for her to tell about the Harwoods, and deemed it the better plan to have it out at once.

"Does she go out much — Miss Loleta?" he asked; and then he rather wondered at himself for having put the question.

"No. Marg'ret Leslie 's the only one thet can claim to any intimate knowin' o' her, or Madam either; an' thet ain't sayin' much, I 'm thinkin'. But o' course I 'm talkin' 'bout outside folks. Now I 've knowed Madam, off an' on, all my life. When I was a young girl, up in Sue Trebbles's store, trimmin' bonnets, many 's the change o' ribbons an' flowers I done for her. An' I always do preservin' an' picklin' for her, an' sort o' look arter things at house-cleanin' time. The cleanin' o' thet house ain't no small job, I can tell ye. An' sech bu-teeful things as is in it."

Her hands were still raised in ecstasy, and her face

was filled with an enthusiastic light, as the Doctor arose and started out for his usual evening stroll.

The twilight was falling fast, and the ocean turning ashen under a glittering new moon. Far down in the west a bronze, as of autumn leaves, had stolen all the sunset glory from the sky; while overhead, and in the east, the stars were already out, in smoky, silvery sparkles.

The lights of the town were visible, if one looked up the street from the old wharf; but they only shone out softly here and there, like fireflies. On the wharf a number of men were sitting or standing, some of them talking, all of them smoking; and the group nearest to Doctor Jasper, as he passed along, had for its centre Uncle Billy and another old man, unmistakably a sailor.

Uncle Billy's rumbling tones fell upon the Doctor's ear: —

"Smother me, messmet', if I don't agree it 's a heritage o' woe for ye. But d' ye see, ye was one as would n't o' took notice, not if ther Indies hed been uphove by an airthquake, an' floated 'longside. Ye allers took too much an' too tight a turn with yer jawin' tackle, an' folks mostly got ter win'ard o' ye. An' so why not yer boy? O' course I know he floundered clean out o' soundin's when he went away for a soldier; an' he was too much given ter hevin' papsy-lals ter be strong 'nough for sich. An' then it was thet ye ought ter hev made up-sail, an' borne down on *thet* craft afore he got any sort o' anchorage on *thet* ground. An' now thet ye 've woke up to it, fate 's stepped in an' took a good strong hitch with

ther haulin' part o' yer wishes. An' so here ye be, with yer tackle stopped short from travellin' by Davy Jones hisself."

Doctor Jasper did not hear the old sailor's reply to this quaint consoling; for he had passed along, and now stopped to lean upon the sea-wall, while he looked down into the water, lying like a black crystal floor, the reflected stars showing in it like dimmed lotos blossoms.

For a few minutes the quiet was broken only by the sound of the lapping waves. Then he heard the dip of oars from a dory, vaguely discernible some little distance away, and several boyish voices broke out with "Sweetest Story Ever Told."

"One of poor Tom's songs," he said to himself, with a deep sigh, as he walked slowly on, up toward the "Betsey Brett."

Buried in his own thoughts, he went by its street-barred door, and followed the path around the rocks that stretched along its other side, and jutted far out over the water.

The platform was well filled, as appeared from the sound of voices coming from it, by the bright little gleams from lit pipes, and the odor of not-over-sweet tobacco. And Doctor Jasper could see the glimmer of many coatless sleeves; for it was never in style to wear more than a "wescut," as it was called, over the shirt.

After a few more minutes of looking and musing, the Doctor turned and picked his way back along the path over the rocks, to the road, and sauntered homeward.

The townsfolk were early-to-beds, and he generally followed their example. And so it was not long before his lamp was extinguished; then, drawing aside the curtains, he stood by the window and took a farewell look at the water.

Uncle Billy and his sorrowing shipmate, with all the others, had gone, and the wharf was black and quiet, the waves lapping its rickety old steps and rocking the craft moored near-by.

CHAPTER VIII

THE bars of warm sunshine lying across the room awakened him the following morning; and looking at his watch, he found it to be almost eight o'clock.

The early sharpness of the sea air had its edge already dulled by the heat; and there was that curious droning hush over land and water which makes so real the calmness of an old-fashioned and holy-kept Sabbath.

It was a hot morning, surely. The sea lay like green glass, with far-out ridges of curling foam that dazzled lazily when the pale beams of sunshine struck them, lance-like, from the dim blue overhead. The haze of the sea-line ran the water into the sky; and the beryl-green of the horizon went blending into the soft blue, until it looked as if it were all water, or all sky.

Breakfast over, the Doctor betook himself with some reading matter out to the grassy part of the headland to wait until the first church bell should sound; this being the signal for all the other bells to ring for fifteen minutes, by way of announcing that morning services would begin in half an hour.

The tide was just turning, and a wandering breeze came from the sea, with enough strength in it to keep the water in the rock-pools trembling. And

these pools were many, for the tide had been very high the night before.

Presently Bob Russel came along, looking very unnatural and uncomfortable in Sunday garments and clean linen. Sarah-Ellen walked beside him; and the man had a sheepish look as he met Doctor Jasper's eyes. But he remarked in his usual awkward way, "It 's near time ter up-keleg, an' mek a stretch for church."

The Doctor responded courteously, and resumed his reading, while the breeze slowly wafted the smoke of his cigar from under his moustache, then to whip it out in airy spirals, and dance it away.

The first bell rang out, its clangings reverberating like the strokes of hammers upon brass as they echoed noisily over the sea. But, like Noah's dove, this was the harbinger of better things; for the mellow sound of a deeper-toned bell now took up the call, soon followed by all the others, until the drowsy quiet was utterly dispelled.

Reaching the Leslie house, Doctor Jasper was hailed from within by the Captain's cheery voice. The front door stood wide open, and the greenish light, filtering down through the big elms near the porch, made the white of the old-fashioned glass bell-knob glitter a reflected emerald.

"Come in, lad, come in," the old sailor called out, as he appeared in the doorway of a room opposite the entrance. A lighted pipe was in one hand, and the other flourished a bright silk handkerchief.

"This is the sort of weather to make a man hail a catspaw. Whew, — it 's enough to boil the very

blue from the sky. But I think we'll have a fresh breeze whistling over us by late afternoon."

"Then I wish it was 'late afternoon' at this very moment," said the Doctor, passing into the dusky coolness of the oak-floored, walled, and ceiled hall, where a huge ship's lantern swung from overhead.

"And yet you and Peg are going to church in all this blaze!"

The Captain spoke in a most deprecating way, while he returned the younger man's cordial hand-clasp.

"That's for Miss Margaret to decide," was the answer, as they went into the sitting-room. "I am entirely at her service."

"Which means," said the Captain, with a knowing smile, "that you could easily survive the blow of being made to stop indoors. Well, the lass is above-stairs, putting on her silver buckles and furbelows, and will be below shortly. And then, mark my words, young man, — not only you, but I, will be faced about and marched to church. It's the same tale pretty much every Sunday, and has been, all my life, for that matter."

The Captain's tone of enforced resignation brought a smile to Doctor Jasper's face as he sank rather listlessly into a chair and passed his handkerchief over his forehead.

"You see," the Captain continued, "where my mother left off (and she — poor, dear soul — began with me before I could talk well enough to object) my little sister Margaret took me in hand. And, like my Peg, — for all she had plenty of pepper, —

she 'd such a coaxing way with her that you could never bear to tell her how your way was n't the same as her own. And now it 's my little Peggy who keeps me to a proper Sunday course."

His fingers had been beating a gentle tattoo upon an empty glass standing on the table; but now he brought them to a sudden stop.

"Bless my soul! What can I have been thinking of, not to ask you to have a nip? No? Don't you think you 'd better? It 's brandy; and that 's cooling, you know. Well, what *will* you have? Try some whiskey; it 's half as old as you are."

But the Doctor assured him that he really cared for nothing.

"Well, perhaps you 're as well off without grog of any sort. But as for me, the ocean was ever my home more than the land; and to the ocean I go for habits and ways. A man can't well live aboard ship without his grog; although if I 'd ever caught myself stowing away more than my head could carry, I 'd have managed somehow to go without it. By the way, our little minister, Lyle, is a great trumpeter for temperance. Did n't I hear you say you admired him? Now if you do, and would like to keep up your admiration, take my advice, lad, and only look at him Sundays, when he 's perched aloft in his pulpit; but belay all else."

"Why so, Captain?" the Doctor inquired, laughing at his host's nautical lingo. "He is certainly an eloquent little speaker."

"So he is, lad, — so he is. I admit that he can handle the gospel ship properly, and tighten all the

shrouds with little or no help. But for me there is ever a kink amidships if I have to face him on the same level; that is, talk to him on week-days. And I have heard the same thing from others. You see he has more brain and ballast than most of the clergy about here; and he knows it, too. But he has a trick of talking to you in a way that makes you feel as though *he* always keeps going straight to windward, spars erect, and spanker-boom amidships; while all the rest of us poor sinners are on our beam-ends, points off our course, and sagging like a billy-boy to leeward."

There was a clack of heels upon the oaken steps of the staircase, accompanied by the rustle of feminine garments; and Margaret's voice called out, "Papa, I hear you saying very dreadful things of somebody. And now I 'm coming to put on your hat and coat, for we must start for church this very minute."

The Captain, by a wink and a smile, telegraphed a sort of "Did n't I tell you?" to Doctor Jasper, and then glanced with a sigh at his own cool *nêgligé*.

CHAPTER IX

MARGARET came into the room and greeted Doctor Jasper in her usual bright way. Then, going around to her father's chair, she patted his cheek with her soft palm as she said gently, "Now come, Papa, or you'll be making us late for service."

He winked again at the Doctor, forgetting that his face was mirrored for Margaret's eyes in the large, old-fashioned glass directly opposite them. She said nothing, but smiled at their guest, who well understood this little by-play, having seen it enacted before.

Then the Captain looked up at Margaret, and began, in a hesitating, "wobbly" fashion, "It's very warm, Peggy; and I really think I'm getting a bit of a — er — headache. And so I —"

"And so" — Margaret finished the sentence for him — "you will come right out into the air, which will be the best thing in the world for you. And I am quite sure the walk to church will make your head feel right."

With this she rumpled his hair, but ever so gently, and then began putting on her gloves.

The Captain groaned dismally, but was still smiling at Doctor Jasper.

"Dear Papa Leslie," Margaret entreated, "we shall be late; and your boots squeak so dreadfully!

I have often thought they did it in order to mortify me into being early; for it has made me blush to see the way people stare, as you walk up the aisle when you are late. And then they turn and look up into the choir, at me, in a very severe way, as if they considered me responsible for the racket you made."

"There, there, lass," and he arose, laughing, from his chair; "say no more about my shortcomings. I'll get my coat right away, and will come bootless, if you say so." Then, as he returned the kiss she gave him, "Why, — the Doctor will think I've a regular vixen of a girl."

She made no reply, but turned her smiling eyes, darkened by the broad brim of her black hat, to meet Doctor Jasper's look.

"Now you walk along," the Captain said, — "you and the Doctor, and I'll be right after you."

As Margaret and the Doctor paused on the porch, while she unfurled her parasol, she turned her head and called softly, "Papa, we will go through the lane, to Vine Street, as that will be all of ten minutes shorter."

The Captain's voice came from some region at the rear of the hall; and its jerky accents gave a hint that he was struggling into his coat.

"All right, — lass; just — as you say. I'll follow — in your — wake."

The low humming of the bees made a soft bass to the feeble treble of the birds, who seemed almost overcome by the heat. The scent of drying grass mingled with the flowers. And now and then there came through this sweetness a rushing of seaweed

odor; for the tide was yet far out, and the wind on shore.

"Do you know, Miss Margaret, I am developing a new sensation — that of curiosity?" said Doctor Jasper, as he opened the old iron gate, and let it clang behind him when he followed her out.

"What do you mean?" And a flash of smiling interest chased away the look of anxiety that had accompanied her wistful glance toward the house.

"Why," he said, "I never heard the name of 'Loleta' until yesterday; and I think it such a charming one that I am quite anxious to see if it corresponds with the young lady who bears it."

"Do you mean Loleta Harwood?"

"Yes. Mrs. Bessly and her daughter have been singing her praises to me; and last evening her brother took tea with us. He is a winsome little chap, and I like him very much. I am hoping Miss Loleta will come to service this morning, as I am curious to see her. Does she at all resemble her small brother?"

"Yes; I think there is a marked likeness between them. She may be at service; but she comes very irregularly, although Madame keeps the old family pew."

"Madame, I understand, never comes herself," he said, wondering at the interest the subject had for him.

Margaret turned completely around, and paused a moment to look for her father, before she answered, "Only once in a great while, to some one's wedding or funeral."

"And this 'Madame,' as everybody calls her, — she must be rather an unusual character, from all I hear."

"She is, — unusual in many ways. She must have been marvellously beautiful as a girl; indeed she is very handsome now, and looks far too young to be Loleta's grandmother. She seems to be very fond of her grandchildren; and yet I have often suspected that they were almost as much afraid of her as I am."

"Afraid of her," the Doctor repeated inquiringly. "It seems to me I should be utterly routed if I met a lady who could make *you* feel afraid of her. Why is it, — what is there about Madame Harwood to frighten one?"

"Nothing so very terrible," was the smiling reply. "What I mean is that she is always kind and courteous; but yet there seems to be a sort of freezing air about her, — something that makes me feel so unnatural when I am with her that I find it hard work to talk or act like myself. I think she is of a cold disposition; one of the kind who say very little we can feel to be spontaneous."

"Those who are always acting — playing a part," he suggested.

"Precisely," said Margaret. "And yet when I look into her big eyes, and recall what I have heard of her, and all I know of her kindness to the poor and suffering, — when I think of all this, I sometimes feel that she may have sorrows of which the rest of us know nothing. And then, too, she has lived so much in other lands, and being in a sense

foreign-born to begin with, — this would perhaps make her feel strange to our ways of living, and appear different from people I 've been accustomed to meet. But," pausing again for another backward look, "why on earth does n't papa come?"

The Doctor also halted; but seeing the Captain's broad shoulders coming around a corner, they sauntered slowly on.

"I should think," said the Doctor, "that to be so very individual and self-contained as Madame Harwood would seem to be, must make one rather lonesome. It may be that hers is one of those cases of a naturally warm heart, lying buried in numerous coffins, fashioned by 'the world, the flesh, and the —' old gentleman we don't care to mention in polite society. I have known people of that sort; and they usually have to pass through so many wrappings in order to come out, that they can never give us anything like a frank or proper expression of their real natures. Such people form a class by themselves; and it is no easy matter to stir them into even a resemblance of common, every-day humanity."

His thoughts had turned to several he knew in his own world, — amongst them his sister and frivolous old aunt. And he spoke with such an undertone of bitterness that Margaret stole a surprised look into his face.

"I 'm afraid I have let my own mood give too strong a color to my words," she made haste to say, with a mistaken idea of what was in his mind. "I surely did n't intend to give you any unkind thoughts

of our neighbor. You must wait until you meet her, and — "

She broke off to exclaim joyously, "Oh, here is papa at last!"

Then looking again, as if to assure herself, she added impatiently, "There, — he has let old Mrs. Lander waylay him. And she is so terribly deaf, and you have to say everything over and over so many times, that it takes five minutes to ask her how she does, and to let her know that you think it 's a fine day."

She had now come to a halt, and stood facing her father, as if to show him that she proposed to wait until he joined her.

This he tried to do, putting into his pocket the handkerchief with which he had been mopping his face, and then resuming his hat.

The old lady had meanwhile laid a black-cottoned hand upon his arm, and peered up at him earnestly while she seemed to be saying some final words. But the Captain turned hastily from her, and hurried onwards.

"You bad Papa!" was all Margaret said; but there was a wonderfully contented look in her eyes. She kept him well in hand after that, and they mounted the stone steps of the church just as the bell was sounding its final warning.

"You bad Papa!" Margaret said again, as they reached the door. "Why did n't you start earlier, or come with us, so as to take things easier, and keep cool?"

He attempted no defence, but only smiled at her;

and, regardless of all the just-let-out Sunday-school children gazing at them, and of the neighbors coming in, he caught her firm white chin in his brown fingers and gave her head a little waggle.

She left them as soon as they were inside, and passed up the old worm-eaten stairs that wound, turret-fashion, to the dusky region above, known as the "choir seats."

The Captain, with a profoundly solemn visage and air, marched slowly up the aisle, with Doctor Jasper in his wake, to the pew of oak, high-backed, and shut in — like all the others — by a hinged door that fastened with a snap-catch.

He motioned the Doctor in by an impressive wave of the hand, and followed, snapping the door noisily behind him. Then, flushing deeply, as if at the disturbance he had been making, he sat down hastily and heavily, and bent to put his cherished Panama hat under the seat, doing it in a would-be suppressed way that was utterly dissipated by the sound of ominous cracklings, as if the back and sides of the pew were threatening to part company beneath his weight.

The light overhead was so dim that the oaken beams and carvings looked like grotesque demons and goblins sailing on vampire wings, with clutching hands outspread. Three of the six little stained glass windows were tilted outward on their pivots; and the droning sound of straying bees came in on the salt-laden breeze now beginning to stir gently amid the gnarled old trees close along the sides of the church.

As was usual in the congregation, the women outnumbered the men, who were interspersed here and there amongst the petticoats; and they all wore expressions half of protestation — wholly of sorrow.

Old Sam Ayres, the sexton, who was still out by the turret stair, was the only man who had not this broken-down and entirely uncomfortable cast of countenance. But he was quite sure to assume it a little later on, along with his seat, when the service should begin.

About the altar all was dim, save only the gold lettering of The Commandments, inscribed upon two tablets reaching from the chancel floor almost to the ceiling.

Doctor Jasper's eyes happened to be resting upon "Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbor's Wife," when he became aware ("out of the tail of his left eye," as Captain Leslie would have said) of a familiar little head on the opposite side of the aisle, and a short distance in front of him.

Looking more directly, he saw, above the high pew-back, Captain Jack's forehead, and half of his expressive eyes, these latter smiling a happy recognition. Some shimmering white covering over a woman's graceful shoulder made a background for the child's head; and glancing from this to the lovely throat-line, Doctor Jasper saw the most beautiful woman he had ever beheld.

The cheek and chin were exquisite in their rounding; the ear like a little pink and white shell; the nose small, and purely Grecian; the lovely mouth slightly pouting, with the lips daintily curved.

She sat with bowed head and lowered lids, her broad-brimmed white hat casting a shadow over the tawny hair, so like the child's, and contrasting so oddly with long curling lashes, black as night, as were also the eyebrows, slightly arched, and their narrow lines drawn as though with a pencil.

To Doctor Jasper she had a saint-like look, accentuated perhaps by her expression and attitude, and in unison with the holy hush of the place.

She sat directly underneath a brass tablet, let into the wall, and telling in verse the virtues of a dead and gone Harwood, who gave rather more than did his fellows toward the building of this same church, nearly two hundred years ago.

The Doctor recalled one Monday forenoon, some weeks before, when he had wandered into the church (seeing the door open, and old Ayres within, "tidyin' up," as he expressed it, "arter Sunday doin's"); and how the verse upon this tablet had so struck his fancy that he copied it into his note-book.

It said: —

> "Blest are the men of peaceful lives,
> Who quench the coals of growing strife.
> They shall be called the heirs of bliss,
> The sons of God — the God of Peace."

He had then concluded that this particular individual must have been famous as a peacemaker, and that probably his powers as such were called for, and shown to good advantage, in carrying out the building of this very edifice.

His beautiful descendant looked to be entirely in keeping with his earthly reputation and Heavenly promise, as she sat beneath his tablet, motionless, with drooped head, dainty, and wholly lovable.

It was thus that Doctor Jasper always thought of her afterwards. The dim light, the solemn hush of the place, the low, tremulous sweetness of the organ, — all these made a sacred setting for her.

His eyes and thoughts were filled with this, when Captain Leslie leaned toward him, and, under cover of the louder tones of the organ, whispered hoarsely, "That 's our sweet beauty over there. Is n't she well worth looking at?"

The abrupt inquiry brought Doctor Jasper somewhat to his senses. He gave himself a mental shake, and smiled back into Captain Jack's eyes. Then, turning his head away, he gave his attention to the marvellous headgear of a lady in front of him, this being of a style that impelled the Captain to remark to Margaret, after service, "Jane Clunes managed to rig herself up such a gaff in the shape of top-hamper as I never, in all my voyagings, ran foul of before."

Mr. Lyle, a smooth-faced, wiry-haired little man, read the service in a mellow, pleasant voice, never very loud, but with an enunciation so distinct as to penetrate farther than had it been stronger-toned.

The singing — in most of which the congregation joined — was at times such as might have led one to say, in the words of Saint Paul, "The whole creation groaneth."

But the second hymn was much better than the

first. The tune was "Toplady," with the words, "Rock of Ages;" and it rang out in a grandly triumphant strain that thrilled Doctor Jasper's heart.

He could hear Margaret's voice above all the others. And there was another voice that came to him, sweet and pure, and clearly true as —

"Silver bugles, playing on a frosty morn."

Looking again at Loleta Harwood, he saw her lips apart, and her eyes, with a rapt shining in them, straying toward the dusky carvings overhead.

He was conscious of a keen sense of regret when her voice was stilled; and for several seconds afterwards he felt the vibrations with which its sweetness had filled his ears.

As the rector left the altar, and ascended the high pulpit to deliver his sermon, Doctor Jasper was quick to observe the way in which Captain Jack snuggled his curly head against the shoulder beside him. It spoke volumes of love — love confiding, and reciprocated.

There was the usual half-suppressed rustling, and a dry little cough here and there, as the worshippers composed themselves to listen. A big bee came whirling in through one of the open windows, and made a few erratic circlings over the nearest heads. Then, as if provoked at seeing no available flowers to light upon, it flew out again with an extra loud buzzing.

When the stillness seemed to weigh more heavily, it was broken by Mr. Lyle's voice; and the sermon began.

It was addressed to certain sorrowing hearts amongst his people, who had recently known sickness and death, and to those desolated by the loss of dear ones whom the war had taken away.

Said the little man in conclusion: "If you had never experienced sorrow, you might never have cared nor thought to go deeper than the worry and fret of your lives here below, day after day, — oftentimes year after year.

"When the sun goes down, and takes away his happy light, your world is in darkness; and only in this darkness can you look up and see the stars. Yet these Heavenly lights are always there, — always over your earth; but the shining sun blinds your eyes to them.

"So, if the sun always shone, you would never see God's stars. So, if your hearts were always filled with the light of happiness, and there came none of the dense darkness that only a great sorrow can bring, you would perhaps never come to know His promise and love.

"Broken spirits need healing; broken hearts need consoling, — such healing and consoling as can come alone from Him, the greatest of all healers. And this consoling it is that abides lastingly; for sorrows that try the heart are sure to give it kindlier thoughts for others. And this wears away much of our earthly natures, which are ugly in God's sight.

"Just as the rocks on the seashore, standing far back, out of reach of the tide, are rough and ugly in their natural shapes, and the pebbles that lie about

them are soiled and dusty, with sharp corners whose jaggedness cuts and hurts the unwary feet wandering over them, — so is the spirit likely to be of those who escape sorrow and suffering. But those who are refined and purified by chastening are like the rocks and pebbles down where the tides wash over, beating and tumbling them about, so that they become smooth and polished, often perfect in form, with no sharp points to cut, no roughness to cause pain and discomfort.

"All such — true hearts and good — need not to preach in words. They can do their Master's work, living their own lives by their own firesides. For the love of high and holy things that makes their goodness within — this will be felt by others, just as the sunshine warms, and the breeze cools, although we cannot touch them.

"This is the spiritual light that Christ has given us, and that He bids us give one another. To each of you, singly, it may appear as would the light from each one of these church windows to some one passing by in the darkness outside, at night. But for us within, holding service, there would be a flood of light diffused all about.

"And so, diffused for others, is the light and life of one who is a faithful follower of Christ's teachings. And this light will lead you more surely through all the darkness of your lives than will any beacon light lit by men's hands to shine out over the sea for safe-guiding the ships into our harbor."

CHAPTER X

THE wayward bee, or another of its kind, had buzzed in and out many times. During the benediction it flew in again, and darted up into the dusky organ-loft, from whence came a low, sweet accompaniment to the silent prayer of the kneeling worshippers. And now, as though its upward flight were a signal, the organ swelled out in loud, triumphant tones, as the people rose and began hurrying into the aisles. A few exchanged handshakes across the pew-backs; but the most of them preserved a funereal demeanor until they arrived outside.

As Captain Leslie and Doctor Jasper went through the door, they were joined by Margaret, who was nodding to old men and women alike, and smiling as blithely upon them as upon her younger and more aristocratic friends. Her father, too, was dropping kindly chat to right and left as he slowly wound his way in and out.

On the gravel path that ran from the little porch down to the street, Doctor Jasper saw Loleta Harwood. And he noted — with a cultivated man's liking for what is pleasant to see — how exquisitely the creamy-white gown fitted the curves of her perfect figure, and with what queenly erectness she carried herself. Small Captain Jack stood beside her, with

one hand outstretched, waiting to be clasped when she opened her white sunshade.

She had stopped to do this, looking over her shoulder as she replied to the question of an old lady back of her. And the Doctor now saw more fully than before the sweet archness of the delicately tinted face, the faultless mouth, and glorious eyes.

These last were all the more pronounced, framed and set off as they were by the waves of light-brown hair that broke into little rings over her forehead and about her ears, to turn a glistening copper color where the sunshine reached in under the broad brim of her white hat, trimmed with water-lilies and grasses.

"Oh, there 's Loleta!" exclaimed Margaret; and she hurried on, leaving her father and Doctor Jasper to follow.

Loleta was now walking slowly along, with Captain Jack's hand clasped in her own. The child, looking back, had caught sight of the Doctor, and seemed desirous to linger, pulling at the detaining hand, and gazing up wistfully into her face as he said something to her. But she only shook her head.

Margaret now joined them. But after going a few steps, chatting with Loleta, she fell back to meet her father and Doctor Jasper, while the other two walked away.

"I tried to make Loleta promise to come and see us; it 's weeks since I was there," Margaret said half-apologetically to the Doctor, as she came beside him.

"Do you keep strict tally, lass," her father asked, looking at her quizzically, "and put it all down in your log?"

"I don't count calls, if that 's what you mean, Papa. But the last time I was at the Harwood house I stayed all the afternoon; and as that was the third time since Loleta has been to see me, I felt as though I ought to wait for her. I think sometimes," she added a little impatiently, "that Madame Harwood would like it better if no one ever came to see Loleta."

"I reckon you 're a bit off your course, my lass, when you talk after that fashion," said her father. "And yet I must say that Madame seems more hardened and cold to young folks' ways and frolics than she used to be. But" — with an encouraging smile — "never you mind, Peg. Never lay up anything against her, even if she may at times seem to hang in the wind a little, because she tells me herself that you 're a prime favorite of hers. And you must never fear to make advances to old neighbors and friends, such as Madame Harwood has been to me these thirty years and over. But, for the matter of that," — and he looked at her proudly, — "I 've no doubt you could weather Old Nick himself, if you cared to try."

Whatever might have been Margaret's reply was diverted by Doctor Jasper speaking of the memorial verse in honor of the departed Harwood.

"Oh, yes," she said; "I remember it very well, for Tom and I used to spell it out, before we could read much; and I got him to copy it into a little

book I keep for such odds and ends as take my fancy. By the way, Doctor, there is something in the book I would like you to see — something Tom wrote the day he went away."

Her voice had been faltering; then she stopped suddenly, while Captain Leslie's laughing eyes grew grave with the heartache that sprang into them.

The wound made by Tom's death had not healed, for all their buoyancy of nature. It would never heal, until father and sister should meet him again on the other side. They made little outward show of grief, even to each other, but went about with cheery faces and smiling lips. And yet, down, far down in their hearts was a sorrow all the greater for being repressed.

A fresher, cooler breeze seemed to be waiting under the shadowing old elms as the three walked up the flagged path from the gate; and Doctor Jasper, taking off his hat, was grateful to feel its touch upon his cheeks and head. As for the Captain, he pushed his hat so far back on his head that one might well wonder what kept it from falling off, as he marched like a drum-major before the other two, up into the house.

"Go get off your sarcenet and fallals, Peg," he said. "I 'll take care of the Doctor." And he proceeded to throw open the blinds, letting in a goodly number of flies along with the cool green light that stole from outside. Then he muttered something not altogether in the nature of a blessing (judging from his suppressed tone) as he clumsily readjusted the screens.

This being accomplished, he started to brew two refreshing drinks, moving about with a nimble tread that was wonderfully light for so heavy a body. Meanwhile he sang softly to himself, interspersing his vocal performances with occasional remarks of a general nature, and questions to the Doctor, who sat looking out of the window.

There was a gnarled old apple tree near by, and he was recalling how brown it was with the autumn coloring that crisp day in the past October when, sitting in this same place, he heard Margaret and her father descending the stairs to receive the message with which dying Tom Leslie had charged him.

Poor Tom had been sleeping many months in the old burying ground. And he himself was here once more, and lingering — for what, he could hardly say, except that having been worn out, in body and mind, he was here, finding new peace and rest, — trying to make himself over.

The Captain was still mixing, and singing.

"A little more liquor, I say. Don't you, my lad? And then the water — that is, for you. As for me, I agree with Paddy when he said, 'First the rum, then a little water, and then the rum, and then a little more rum. And every drop of water you put in after that, spoils the punch.'

"'And press with vigor on,
A heavenly race demands.'

Now a dash of lemon, and there you are!"

He gave a great sigh of content, and subsiding

into a capacious arm-chair opposite the Doctor, proceeded with grave deliberation to fill a long clay pipe.

While doing this he craned his neck so as to look out of the window at the sails.

"I told you we 'd be having wind aloft, my lad; and there it is. Look at the ' Sabbath-breakers ' out there in the bay; they 'll be having the parson after them."

A moment later he asked abruptly, "By the way, Doctor, is Mrs. Bessly taking good care of you?"

"Oh, yes. I 'm quite at home there by this time, — quite one of the family. Mrs. Bessly is an odd sort of woman, is n't she? I have found her quite a tonic, in her way, and just the tonic I seem to need these days."

"Yes; she 's an original, without any doubt. And I 'm glad she 's making you comfortable, and that you like it there. But somehow I don't feel it to be just the thing for you to be living there, while there are three empty rooms in this house, — one of them Tom's, and you my boy 's best friend."

"You are very kind; and I may yet claim your hospitality. But my own people have always found fault with me for being altogether too independent; and there 's nothing like consistency, you know. And then, Captain, you see I am so accustomed to Mrs. Bessly and her ways that the strangeness has all worn off, and it 's quite like home."

He wished to stay the oft-repeated argument he knew was trembling upon the Captain's lips, and

to do this without seeming unappreciative of his kindness.

The older man turned his eyes away and smothered a sigh. Then, after taking a few puffs at his pipe, he said resignedly, "Well, I suppose I 'll have to belay. But I 'm glad that all the strangeness is gone, as you say; for, from what I have had of it, — and I 'm glad to say it 's only a little, — the first few days, and more especially, nights, in new quarters, don't make a pleasant memory. Nothing fits; there are always too few or too many chairs; and whether few or many, they 're pretty sure to seem like centipedes as to the number of legs they carry for you to run foul of in the dark. All the furniture is sure to be in the road to something else, walk you fore or aft, or any other way."

The Doctor laughed. "But this is only because one is not accustomed to them. Once you get used to your surroundings, everything seems all right, and in place."

"In other words, young man," said the Captain, looking at his friend in an odd way, "you make yourself over on the plan of your surroundings, and so suit your ship, if she starts out in failing to suit you."

"Well," the Doctor answered, willing to adapt himself to his companion's mood, "you might put it in that way, I suppose, although the matter never struck me so before."

"What a fine thing it would be," the Captain went on discursively, — "what a very fine thing, if we could all be as accommodating about our friends

and neighbors; for we rarely give over striving to have them made over to suit our own notions. And when they don't, or won't, make over, we can by no means get used to them. What do you think about it, my lad?"

"I think, Captain," Doctor Jasper answered soberly, "that your proposition is a pretty broad one, and that it covers rather more ground than I care to go over upon such a warm Sunday as this, even with the assistance of so cooling a drink as the one you 've concocted for me. But" — a very friendly light showing in his eyes — "I am perfectly willing to say that I am sure I could never wish to have either you or Miss Margaret made over upon any plan of my own, even if I had one."

It was easy to see that the Captain was very much pleased; but he only said laughingly, "Why, my lad, you 're as neat of lingo as if you 'd kissed the blarney stone. But, speaking of my Peg," — and his face became serious again, — "I 'll say this, even if she is my own, and it 's hardly becoming, as some might call it, for me to be talking of her, that a realer, truer woman does n't walk the earth. She 's straight up and down, clinched in solid cast-iron principles and grit, and faithful to the hand that steers her. She has a sound heart — my little Peg; thank God for that!"

The Doctor, familiar as he was with the Captain's manner of speech, was not surprised to hear him talk about his daughter as he might speak of his ship. And so he only smiled as he said, looking over at his host, who was puffing again at his long

pipe, "I don't think any one seeing Miss Margaret could have any doubts as to the truth of what you have said, Captain. And I never saw a happier face than hers."

There came, as he spoke, the thought of another face, upon which his eyes had rested for the first time that morning. He was thinking of the tawny hair, and those wondrous eyes; of the perfect features and creamy skin; of the beauty and purity of the entire picture. He had met many women, and in many climes; but none of them had affected him as did this one, the mere sight of whom seemed to have stirred into activity the very depths of his strong nature.

"Aye," the Captain was saying, "and I might as well try to catch the sunshine that makes diamonds upon the water as to try and explain the happiness she diffuses about the old house and in her daddy's soft heart. I have seen many fine girls in my time, Doctor. But, for the most part, there's the same difference between them and my Pegaway that there would be between being shut up in the hot air of a ball-room, with a lot of gabbling idiots you feel forced to hold your own with for manner's sake, and a nice sea-breeze, when you can sit on the deck of your own ship, sailing through a smooth sea, with the one you love, and who knows you best, sitting alongside you as you smoke. And the stars so thick, and looking to be so close, that you feel the Lord and His angels to be nearer than common."

Captain Leslie's voice had become wonderfully soft and gentle; his chin was sunk on his breast,

and the gone-out pipe held carelessly in his drooping hand. It was evident that his thoughts were wandering in the past, amid other scenes, with the mother of his "Pegaway" for a companion.

His musings were interrupted by the appearance of Margaret, looking fresh and cool despite her black draperies. But these were so sheer as to show the dimples that made little nicks in each elbow; and fastened to her dress was a great water-lily.

"See," she said, pointing to the flower; "isn't it beautiful? I found a big bowl full of them, up in my room; and Eliza said that Madame Harwood sent a quantity of them to me, — that Louis, one of her darkeys, brought them just after we left for church."

She had come close enough to her father for him to bury his nose in the fragrant blossom; and, having done this, he kissed her. But the salutation caused her to exclaim, as she rubbed her reddened cheek, "Oh, Papa! Your face scratches just as the blackberry bushes used to!"

"How can that be," he demanded, "when I shaved myself as usual this morning?"

"I surely don't know. But I really think, Papa," — looking at him seriously, — "that I must learn how to shave you."

"No doubt you could, lass," and he winked at Doctor Jasper. "No doubt at all. But that is one thing you 'll have to try your hand at on another man before I 'll let you practice on me."

Their laughter was joined in by Eliza, who had

come to announce that dinner was ready; and out to the dining-room they went.

As they were seating themselves, Eliza called attention to the dish of water-lilies upon the table.

"An' you ought to see that 'pool,' as they call it, up to Madam's," she said. "There 's a fountain plays in the middle of it; an' last summer the lilies was like a lovely white an' green carpet all 'round the water."

This brought to Doctor Jasper's mind Mrs. Bessly's description of the marble satyr who spouted water through a bunch of reeds, or, as she expressed it, "a stone *satire*, blowin' water through a lot o' holler sticks." And he was still smiling at the recollection as he turned to Captain Leslie with, "So that was Miss Harwood we saw at church this morning?"

"Yes. And was n't I right in calling her 'our sweet beauty,' Doctor?"

"Entirely so. She is very lovely, and must be greatly admired."

"'Greatly admired,' say you, my lad? Well, she might have any quantity of admirers; but you see Madame has a taut hand, and nobody dares go near the girl. But it 's a fact, that when she brings the whole broadside of her beauty to bear, she 's hard to beat. And she 's a fine lass, Doctor, aside from her beauty; she could n't be otherwise, with Jack Harwood's blood in her veins. She is bound to have a brave nature, and good, — one that will never fail to lay hold of the proper rope for a friend in trouble, and pull with all its might, singing cheerily as it drags. But she 's not

likely to find a mate in this town; for Madame is much too proud to permit it."

Eliza, who had been nodding her head in affirmation of what the Captain was saying, now added, "All the young fellers are crazy 'bout Loleta Harwood; but she don't even look at one of 'em. Now there was that Trowbridge boy — Asa, old Deacon Trowbridge's son. Everybody knows he was dead in love with her; an' yet I don't b'lieve she ever knew there was sech a chap livin'. But that did n't seem to make no difference to him, judgin' by the way he used to write poetry 'bout her, an' was always hangin' 'round places where he hoped he might see her, an' makin' a perfect fool of himself 'bout her. An' then when the war come on, an' he said he was goin' to fight the Spaniards, an' make a mark in the world, some said they guessed he was thinkin' to git her to take notice of him. But, for all any one ever saw, she took no more 'count of his bein' in Cuba than she did before. An' now they say he got to drinkin' down there; an' that was what killed him, 'stead o' the wound he got in the first fight they had."

"If that is so," remarked the Captain, "then I 'm not surprised at his taking to drink when he found himself away from home-rule, and surrounded by temptations. Poor devil, — what can be expected of a boy brought up as he was?"

"I ain't seen none o' the Trowbridges these late years," Eliza said. "But Asa's father, the old Deacon, was a most worthy man."

"Ugh!" grunted the Captain, in a way not to be mistaken.

But Eliza, with gathering severity in her eyes, repeated, "He was, Captain, a most worthy man; an' he was a self-made man too; I've often heard him say so himself."

"You have, have you?" said the Captain, grimly. "Then, my good Eliza, all I have to say is this,— that Providence ought to have been very thankful that Deacon Trowbridge took the job into his own hands."

CHAPTER XI

IN the late afternoon there was a pleasant breeze. The heat, no longer uncomfortable, had warmed out the strongest fumes of the weeds, and of the mint growing along the roads, until the air was spicy with their odors, as the three — Margaret, her father, and Doctor Jasper — went off for a stroll about the less populated part of the town.

They took it very leisurely; and as they turned their steps homeward, Captain Leslie proposed going through the street that led past the Harwood place, this being the shortest.

They had not gone far before Margaret said, "There's the Harwood house, Doctor Jasper." And looking ahead of him he saw it for the first time.

It was of stone, and stood some little distance back, upon a knoll, from which the ground fell away sharply, and then stretched a level lawn to the street.

About it was a grove of tall elms that made dim the gravelled walk leading from the iron gates to the steps of the spacious piazza, about whose columns wound a mass of vines that made a wall of green over the lattice, and followed it around the side of the house. The lilac-colored blossoms festooned amid the green marked it as a wistaria; and Doctor Jasper remembered hearing Mrs. Bessly mention a

certain "lovely *mysterious* vine, growin' all over the porch."

Many were the sweet scents from the flower-beds and rare shrubs. And amid the perfume came the sound of the water playing through the bunch of reeds the satyr held to his mouth, and then splashing into the gleaming pool that reached almost to his marble hips.

As they walked slowly by, looking through the closed gate, the clear notes of a mocking-bird rang out from the open windows of the large conservatory.

"It is indeed a beautiful place," Doctor Jasper said, half to himself, and as though thinking more than his words expressed.

"Aye, that it is," assented the Captain; "and made so by Jack Harwood, after he brought his bride home to it. It was always a fine old place; but not fine enough for Madame, he thought. And so he made it over in the fashion you see. And it's as fine within as without, Doctor, and would seem to have everything about it to bring happiness. And yet I'll bet that my little Peg is far happier in our old-fashioned craft than is Loleta in all her splendor; that is, if the girl's looks indicate the wind and weather of her home life."

Margaret did not affirm this in words; but the look she gave her father was good proof of there being little amiss with her at the present moment.

"I have a warm place in my heart for anything that was Jack Harwood's," he continued, as they strolled along; "and so I like Margaret to get Loleta down to the house whenever she can manage

it. For although I should be sorry to do anything likely to run foul of Madame's notions for her granddaughter, still I have a lass of my own who gives me my bearings as to the looks of one sailing a happy course. And it's all wrong, say I, — dead wrong, that Jack Harwood's granddaughter should have that look in her eyes, and that down-droop at the corners of her pretty mouth, when you catch her face off-guard. Young folks should be kept happy, and then they won't grow into sour old folks, which the Lord knows they do sometimes, in spite of — well, thunder!"

The Captain's voice had an unusual ring, as he scowled up at the sky, where the sun, now gone down, had left a haze of rose and carnelian, amid which Venus glittered fitfully.

"Papa Leslie!" exclaimed Margaret, in laughing reproof. "You look just like the big bear 'that lived in a wood — growly, growly, growly.'"

The scowl was gone instantly, and his eyes turned to her with their wonted smile.

They had now reached the home gate; and he said, turning to the Doctor, "Come in, my lad, and have a cup of tea with us, and a smoke with me, afterwards. And Peg — you shall sing 'Haul the Bowline' for the Doctor and your old Daddy. But, bless my stars! It is Sunday evening, is n't it? But you shall sing 'Pegaway' for us, Sunday or no."

Half an hour or so after tea was over, Margaret came into the room where the two men were smoking, and handed Doctor Jasper a small leather-bound book.

"There," she said, pointing to one of the pages, "that is what I spoke to you about, — what Tom wrote for me that last afternoon."

She went over to the piano, and sitting with her back to him, began running her fingers softly over the keys, while the Captain puffed slowly at his pipe as he stared fixedly at his sister Margaret's gypsy face, which seemed to be looking back at him from out its heavy frame.

This is what the Doctor was reading:

"Calm sleeps the sea, when storms are o'er,
With bosom silent and serene,
When but the planks along the shore
Reveal that wrecks have been.

"So some frail leaf, like this, may be
Found floating on Life's endless tide,
The sole remaining trace of me,
To say I lived — and died."

He made a movement to close the book, but was checked by Captain Leslie's outstretched hand.

The Captain took the little volume and held it for some time, his eyes fixed upon the page. Then he laid it gently on the table, and drew the back of one hand across his eyes.

He resumed his pipe, and a silence fell over them, broken at last by his saying, "Come, Peg, my lass, — sing 'Pegaway;' it will do all of us good."

Margaret struck some minor chords that had a sullen, resonant boom, like that of the surf along shore; and these softened into a gentle murmuring, like the outgoing tide, as she sang, —

"Pegging away,
All the long day;
Stitching ever, till set of sun.
Tides ebb and flow,
Hours come and go;
Rest comes, after the work is done.

"Pegging away,
All the long day;
White sails drifting across the sea.
Tides ebb and flow,
Days come and go;
Voyage soon over for you and me.

"Pegging away,
All the long day;
Shine and shadow, spring and fall.
Tides ebb and flow,
Men come and go;
God, the Father, is over all."

As Dr. Jasper walked home in the dim moonbeams that bathed the old town, scarcely a light was to be seen, save here and there from some window close up under the quaint roofs.

Up on the hill — the hill that was God's Acre, and rising higher than all the land about it — the moonlight was flooding the stones, making the black ones blacker and the white ones whiter, and giving to all a calmness that the sunlight never bestows.

The whole scene seemed a part of Margaret's song; and as the sound of the sea came to his ears he softly hummed the refrain —

"Tides ebb and flow,
Men come and go;
God, the Father, is over all."

CHAPTER XII

THE next morning turned out to be what Mrs. Bessly called "a real bangy day," — far too breezy for the trip Dr. Jasper has proposed taking upon the "Pretty Sally." And as he sat down to the usual seven o'clock breakfast, the wind, blowing from the north and northeast, came in fierce, fitful gushings that slammed left-open doors and poorly-fastened window shutters.

Yet it was a happy, shining morning, with a wide blue heaven full of liquid luster, softened by many small clouds blowing into the southwest, their whiteness glorified as their ragged peaks and chasms sailed past the sun. The sea was like rough green glass, with but little sparkling in its sullen tossing water. There had evidently been a severe storm not very far away.

The day passed without incident; and in the late afternoon Dr. Jasper went up to have his usual game of cribbage with Captain Leslie.

The following morning proved more propitious as to wind and weather. And at an early hour young Sam Ayres played a lively reveille with a long fishing pole upon the slats of Doctor Jasper's closed blinds, this being the signal that all was ready for the "Pretty Sally's" trip to the mackerel nets.

They returned about noon; and as the Doctor came ashore he found himself face to face with

Margaret Leslie, standing with little Captain Jack at the top of the wharf steps.

After a quick but smiling acknowledgment of his greeting, she exclaimed, "Oh, dear! Has Uncle Billy escaped me, Doctor Jasper? Jacques and I were in my cave, and saw you come in; Madame let him come down to visit me this morning. We have planned a picnic to Skuttle-Hump for some day this week, if Uncle Billy will take us. Papa persuaded Madame to say that Loleta and Jacques might go with me; and we want you. Of course you 'll go, won't you?"

"Most assuredly I will," he replied heartily; for had there been no other inducement, the hope of meeting Loleta was sufficient of itself.

"Very well; that 's settled. And I 've asked Mrs. Bessly, who says she will look after things, and help us generally. You see papa can't go, nor Eliza, and so I thought I 'd better ask Mrs. Bessly."

While she was speaking, Doctor Jasper had extended his hands to Captain Jack; and the child's small hands were instantly laid within the large ones, there to be held fast.

Margaret, observing this, said impulsively, "Is n't he a little sweetheart?" And as she laid her hand caressingly upon his head, Doctor Jasper noted the quick flush that came to the lad's cheek, and the adoration showing in the upward glance he cast toward the girl's bright face.

Uncle Billy now appeared, some extra shades of red giving a richer tinge to his always florid countenance, as he trundled before him, in a waver-

ing, awkward fashion, an uncommonly large wheelbarrow.

He halted when he saw the others, and said, as if in answer to the Doctor's look, "Goin' ter tek my ketch up ter Pebbles's, as I promised, 'though he don't allers give ther best price."

"D' ye think ye can find 'em in that barrer, Uncle Billy?"

This inquiry came facetiously from young Sam Ayres, who had now joined them.

Uncle Billy paid no attention to him, and clutched the handles as though suspecting the barrow might take a notion to run away. Then, as the others laughed at Sam's question, the old man pretended to look very sternly at Captain Jack.

But this by-play was quickly succeeded by a broad smile, as, with a quaint tenderness in touch and tone, he put one of his great brown paws on the child's shoulder, and said, "Here, ye young monkey, come, go 'long."

Captain Jack, nothing loath, sprang into the barrow, taking care not to touch the shining mackerel that Sam was covering with some bagging.

But Margaret objected, saying that she had promised to keep him with her until he was sent for, or she herself took him home.

"But Uncle Billy can ride me home," the child suggested; "can't you, Uncle Billy?"

"Wa'l, yes, I can; an' then, come ter think, no, I can't," the old sailor answered. "Yer see I've got ter go an' do ther marketin', which is why I've got this here barrer o' John Dean's. An' then whatever

would yer grandma say, ter see ye ridin' home in a dirty barrer, an' atop a lot o' bundles, or some dirty fish?"

Margaret added coaxingly, "Now listen, Jacques: You are forgetting what a lovely time we are going to have, after I arrange something with Uncle Billy. I must talk to him now, and get him to say, 'Yes,' before he runs away again."

She now proceeded to unfold her plans and wishes to the old man.

He listened attentively, taking both hands from the barrow-handles, in order that he might give his bald head a vigorous mopping with the brilliant bandanna always reposing in the top of his hat, while he gazed steadily into Margaret's animated face, about which the sea breeze had set her short curls stirring, as she talked in her eager, impulsive way, the color going and coming in her cheeks, her white teeth showing, her happy eyes shining.

When she finished, he dropped the handkerchief into the crown of his hat, and replaced that battered article upon his head. Then, taking a fresh hold upon the handles, he said, "Wa'l, Miss Marg'ret, terday be a Chuesday, be n't it? An' I can't go. An' We'n'sday nor Thursday I can't go. An' why? 'Cause both them days I've promised ter hold my craft ter sail parties, at notice, thet 's comin' down from ther city ter look over ther premises on Bramble, out there, for thet children's home, or convent, or whatever they say ther island 's been sold for."

"Is it really so, then," Margaret inquired, "that

the island has been bought for a home for nuns and orphans?"

"Yes, thet it be — more 's ther pity," he grunted dismally. "It 'll be a fine thing for ther poor younkers; but it 'll be ther revarse for townsfolk, in ther supplies 'o mumps, an' measles, an' feviers, an' what-not, thet 'll be floatin' 'round on ther breezes, free o' charge. An' so ye see, Miss Marg'ret," he added more briskly, returning to the subject in hand, "I can't tek ye out this week, no-how; for ye see Saturday must be my tidyin'-up-day 'long shore."

"Why, yes, you can, Uncle Billy; you have Friday left."

"But ye surely would n't think o' startin' out pleasurin' on a Friday?" said the old sailor, looking at her uneasily.

"Of course I would!" she exclaimed, with an amused side glance at Doctor Jasper.

"Wa'l, wa'l," and Uncle Billy's eyes spoke marked disapproval. But, after a pause, he sighed deeply, as if resigned to fate, and added, "Then I s'pose I might as well give in, an' call it Friday."

"And if anything happens, then of course you 'll blame it to me."

She smiled at the old man, who looked sheepish, and mopped his head once more as he said coaxingly, "I 'll hev ther 'Pretty Sally' in good trim for ye; an' — but s'pose we say Saturday, Miss Marg'ret, an' I 'll let tidyin'-up go for onc't."

"No, Uncle Billy," she answered decisively; "my heart is set upon Friday, and Friday it is. And we 'll start at nine o'clock, wind and weather favoring."

"So be 't," he grumbled; and once more grasping the handles of his barrow, he trudged along.

Margaret watched him a few moments, and then turned to the Doctor.

"Is n't it odd," she said, "how superstitious old sailors are about Friday?"

"I 've known other people who were the same," he answered. "I have often had cause to be amused, — yes, and wonder, as well, at the pet superstitions of intelligent and well-educated people."

"Have you none yourself?" she inquired teasingly. "Have n't you even a little one hidden away somewhere?"

"Well, I 'll be honest with you, and admit that it makes me feel a bit uncomfortable to have a bird of any sort fly into my room from out of doors, or into that of any one of whom I am fond. I cannot explain why this should be so, but it is nevertheless a fact."

Here Captain Jack, who had stood with uplifted eyes, drinking in all the Doctor said, exclaimed eagerly, "Oh, I do know what you mean! For when a bird does fly in, it does mean that some one is going to Heaven."

A troubled look shot across Doctor Jasper's face as he asked, "Why, my boy, who ever told you such stuff as that?"

The abruptness of the question, no less than the Doctor's manner, seemed to have hurt the child, for he said timidily, "It is really true, for Zabette did tell me about a little girl she knew. And a white dove did fly through her window, and in few days

she went away to Heaven, and her body was what they call 'dead.'"

Margaret and Doctor Jasper exchanged expressive glances; and the latter said, laying his hand gently upon the child's head, "That is quite wonderful, my little man; but it is n't just what I wanted to tell Miss Margaret. See here," he added in a more animated tone, "I remember something she said awhile ago of the fine time you and she were going to have; and I am beginning to wonder if I am to have any part of it."

Captain Jack laughed and looked up at Margaret, who said, "Let us go and sit in our orchard for a while. It is cool there; and I told Eliza we would have lunch out under the trees. I know she has some goodies all ready for Jacques and me; and, Doctor, I 'm sure we 'll have plenty for you. So come along, won't you, and share them with us?"

"Certainly I will," he replied; "and with a great deal of pleasure. Is the Captain at home?" he inquired, as they strolled toward the Leslie house.

"No. He went over to Pilot's-Head this morning with Captain Piffet, to see about something or other, and so we decided to wait dinner until he gets back. And there 's no telling when that will be when he goes off on a day's trip like this."

Down in the orchard it was cool and pleasant, with a dimness like that of cathedral aisles, as the light stole through the long avenues between the rows of apple and pear trees. Some rustic chairs, upon one of which was a guitar; a large bench, partially covered by a bright rug; a table, and a couple

of hammocks swinging near, showed the place to be a resort serving as an " out-door room."

There was a white cloth spread over the table, upon which Eliza was now placing sundry eatables. And the Doctor, having seated himself, was idly watching Margaret, who had taken the guitar and was tuning it.

Suddenly there came a joyous cry from Captain Jack, who was swinging in one of the hammocks.

" Loleta, — Loleta! Here does come my Loleta! " And he dashed away through the trees.

It seemed as though the girl were fated to make pictures for Doctor Jasper to carry in his memory. The first was with the dim lights of the church about her, as she sat with drooped head and downcast lids, a breathing embodiment of all that was beautiful and womanly.

And this second one was no less lovely, as he saw her, dressed entirely in white, pause by one of the flower-beds and stand motionless, looking as pure and sweet as the stately day-lilies beside her. Then as she came closer, moving with a slow, lissome grace, Doctor Jasper looked into her eyes.

They were eyes such as he had never seen before: so large, and long-lashed; so soft, and yet so brilliant; eyes that held such a magnetism and mystery in their depths.

But he was not permitted to look long upon them. The white lids fell quickly; and he came to his every-day senses, as Margaret introduced them to one another.

Loleta was the first to speak; and he did not fail

to note the low, sweet voice, and the accent so like that of the boy.

"I have come for our *bébê*," she said, smiling at Captain Jack, who made a sudden dart and caught one of her slender white-gloved hands.

"But you will stop a little while, won't you, Loleta," said Margaret, rather urgently, "and take a cup of chocolate with us? We are going to have a sort of picnic lunch; and now that you are here, it 's simply perfect. You need n't bother any more," she added, turning to Eliza; "if we should need anything, I 'll come for you." And taking hold of the good woman's shoulders, she faced her toward the house, and gave her a gentle push.

"Now, Loleta, you must make us all happy by sitting down in this chair, as if you were going to stay a while. And please try to get that far-away look out of your eyes, and act as if you knew where you are, and whom you are with."

Loleta complied so far as to seat herself; and a smile came to her lips as Margaret continued, "If you don't take care, I 'm afraid we 'll see you as absent-minded an old lady as Eliza's grandmother, who once lost her temper because she could n't get one of her overshoes on her foot. And finally her daughter had to tell her that she was trying to pull it on over the other one."

"Has the worthy Eliza inherited any of this?" gravely inquired Doctor Jasper, as he received his chocolate from Margaret. "I have never happened to notice anything about her to indicate a dreaming mind, or one much given to introspection."

Loleta had already been served ; and he watched her as she slowly drew off her gloves, revealing a pair of beautiful white hands, the oval-nailed fingers flashing with many gems. Then he turned to Margaret, who was answering his question.

"No; but her sister did. They say that once she went to meeting, bonnetless, and several other times without thinking to take out her curl-papers. And once, when she was going away in the stage, and went down to Culman's to put her name on the slate, so that they would call for her, she tried and tried to make a mark, until she found herself trying to write with a new thimble she had just bought."

All this appeared to tickle little Captain Jack, who was regarding Margaret with the look his expressive eyes usually held for her.

"It strikes me," remarked the Doctor, "that you and the Captain have reason to congratulate yourselves upon the fact that Eliza has none of this family trait; for otherwise there is no telling what dreadful things might happen. Suppose, for instance, that some fine morning she should make the fire with the beefsteak, and then broil the wood for breakfast. I remember" — with a smiling glance at Captain Jack — "an extreme case, where an absent-minded woman was about to give her child a piece of bread and butter. But she buttered the youngster's head, and then tried to rock the loaf of bread to sleep."

The others all laughed happily, as young people will; and Captain Jack, laying his hand caressingly on the man's sleeve, said with a familiar tenderness in look

and tone, "Ah, *mon Docteur*, I do think that is much funnier than what Miss Margot did tell."

It was most unusual for the child to show such a side of his reserved nature to any one, excepting Margaret, outside his home circle. And knowing this, she glanced across the table to see if Loleta had noticed it.

The latter seemed to be looking at both Doctor Jasper and Captain Jack, and in a way so curious as to make Margaret wonder if she could be jealous

Her face bore such an expression of uneasiness and disapproval that Margaret, wishing to try and divert her thoughts, whatever they might be, said laughingly, "I think we all have fits of being absent-minded. At least I hope so, when I recall some of the stupid things I have caught myself doing."

"You surely never had occasion to go to church in curl-papers," remarked the Doctor, smiling at her, and then at Captain Jack, who had withdrawn his hand, while his eyes wandered with an appreciative twinkle to the curls on Margaret's uncovered head.

"No," she affirmed. "But people do stupid things, even if their hair curls. Only the other day I started downstairs to see old Mrs. Doane, and found I was trying to keep cool by fanning myself with a hair-brush."

They laughed again; and the Doctor said, "Yes; but that was not so bad, because you didn't disobey the eleventh commandment, and get found out. That is, you wouldn't have been, had you not told upon yourself."

"And you do always tell upon yourself, Margot," added Loleta, with a smiling glance at her.

The look that Margaret had wondered at was gone, and Loleta seemed to have forgotten the cause which awakened it.

"Do I?" was the laughing query. "I don't mean to, and don't wish to; for how often it is that, by keeping still, people get credit for all manner of things they could never do, even if they ever thought of trying."

"There is little doubt as to that," said the Doctor; "history is full of such cases. And we all know how people have acquired high renown and position simply because they knew enough to be close-mouthed. And then again how often it is that people's intentions are misunderstood, and a wrong construction placed upon their acts."

Margaret glanced at him quickly, to see him looking at Loleta; and it occurred to her that he was thinking of what they had said Sunday about Madame Harwood.

But this was not in his mind. The fact was, that he found it almost beyond his power of self-control to keep his eyes from dwelling too fixedly upon the girl's marvellous beauty, in spite of the fear he had that his face might be reflecting too clearly the admiration with which he was filled.

There was something about her that drew his gaze as naturally and irresistibly as the Polar star draws the needle's point toward its far-away brightness. And so, however he might seek to force his eyes elsewhere, it was only to have them drawn back to the lovely face before him.

Loleta appeared to be entirely unconscious of this. Indeed she had scarcely looked at him at all, her luminous eyes wandering from Margaret's bright face, to fill with tender love as they rested upon little Captain Jack.

But now they were turned slowly to Doctor Jasper, as he added, "What we have been talking about reminds me of a poem I ran across in an old magazine I was reading yesterday."

"What was it?"

Loleta spoke with some show of interest, and for the first time she looked into Doctor Jasper's eyes with deliberate intentness.

"The poem told an odd story," he replied, "unlike anything I remember to have seen before. It was about a beautiful woman who lived in a small village, and was reputed to be selfish, and vain, and heartless. It was in time of war, and the village was attacked by the enemy when there were only a few men to protect it. One of these, an old priest, left his altar to assist his people, and saw some of the enemy's soldiers murdering a young boy. He ran to the lad's rescue, when a soldier shot him in the back, and killed him. The woman, meanwhile, had sought shelter in the church, believing this to be the safest place, and tried to hide behind the altar. But as some of the enemy came into the church, she ran out to implore mercy, and was killed."

"Well?" asked Loleta, as the Doctor paused.

"Here comes the moral, if such it can be called: It was said afterwards that the good old priest was

shot while running away, like a coward; and the woman — they told how brave she had shown herself to be, and how she had been slain while trying to protect the deserted altar."

"That shows how much human judgment is worth," was Margaret's half-scornful comment.

"Yes," assented Loleta, looking once more at Doctor Jasper, with — as it seemed to him — a new light shining in her eyes. "And when I do read of the battles, and see all the praise given to the officers, and the brave deeds of them, and see how much they do write of their own doings, — I have thought how sad it was, and unfair, that so little was said of the poor soldiers and sailors, but for whose being steadfast and brave these same officers would never have won the glories that made them to be written down as heroes."

"It is the fate of private soldiers to be a mere body — a machine, you know."

The Doctor spoke somewhat abstractedly, for he was wondering if another pair of eyes like Loleta's had ever been put into a woman's head.

"And yet every man of them has a heart and mind to feel," said Margaret; "yes, and a body to suffer, and a pair of legs to save it by running away from the enemy."

Doctor Jasper laughed.

"Very true. But it has always been the same story; and it always will be, while wars last."

"What crazy things we read of soldiers doing on the battle-field," Margaret remarked, after a short silence. "Now there was Mr. Lyle's brother — "

Here Captain Jack cut in.

"Whenever I do hear Mr. Lyle say that we ought to forgive our enemies, 'cause God does say so, I always do wonder something."

The child hesitated, and glanced at Loleta, who was shaking her head at him in gentle reproof at the impulsive interruption.

"What is it?" Margaret asked smilingly.

"I do wonder," gravely replied the young theologian, "why He will never forgive the Devil, 'cause the Devil is the only enemy He has."

He did not see the illy-suppressed smiles upon the faces about him, for his eyes were bent upon the chocolate he was stirring. And a sunbeam stole across his cheek, and lingered for an instant upon his small fingers, as Margaret murmured to Doctor Jasper, "Out of the mouths of babes!"

"What is that you did say, Miss Margot?" the child asked, looking at her.

"I say the sun is getting at us here, sweetheart," the girl replied, caressing his smooth cheek, "and that we 'll have to move farther back under the trees."

When they had left the table, she took the guitar, and finished tuning it.

"Now," she announced, "we must have some music; and Loleta must sing for us." Then, glancing toward Captain Jack, who was lying on the ground, out of earshot, "Loleta, where does the child get such queer ideas?"

"He was always so," Loleta said, with a wistful smile. "I do remember one evening, at his bed-

hour, down in Cuba, we could not find him. And at last I did almost fall over him, sitting on the top step of a veranda; his elbows were on his knees, and his chin in his palms. A tiny one he was then — in dresses still. When I exclaimed, he did say that he was looking at the stars. And he said to me, 'I think, Loleta, that God did not make the stars at all good this night. See how they do go — so, and 'most out.' And he did shut and open his eyes, like the stars, trembling."

"He is certainly a very dear little fellow," said the Doctor, in, for him, a markedly impulsive way, while he wondered to himself at the strange thrills her soft voice and quaint speech had sent quivering through him. "About the dearest I ever met; and I have grown very fond of him."

Margaret saw the same look come to Loleta's face as when Captain Jack had called his new friend "*mon Docteur.*"

Doctor Jasper also saw it this time; and the gleam that sprang into her eyes as she glanced at the child reminded him of nothing so much as a lioness he had seen watching her young at play.

CHAPTER XIII

"DID you have this day made to order for us, Uncle Billy?" Margaret asked laughingly.

She was sitting near him aboard the "Pretty Sally," clad in a suit of blue serge, with a yachting cap set upon the short, curling locks that framed a face looking as happy and bright as the day itself.

Loleta was next to her, holding a large sun-shade that sheltered them both; and beyond them was Mrs. Bessly, attired for comfort alone, and wearing a hat whose brim was almost broad enough to have served for a flying topsail, had Uncle Billy wished to send one aloft.

"Belike, Miss Marg'ret," was the old sailor's irresponsive reply. "But there surely be no fault ter be found with this here day."

He sat, tiller in hand, looking straight ahead, with a protuberance showing like an affliction of mumps (or perhaps "mump," as it was confined to one cheek), where a huge quid of tobacco was stowed, rather than chewed, — the waiver of mastication being out of deference to his lady passengers.

There was a steady wind, and the keel of the "Pretty Sally" slid along like the runners of a sleigh over frozen snow, while the water sputtering past her sides fell behind in swirling white hills.

Young Sam Ayres, lying along the deck, with an arm around a backstay, was looking alternately at the sky, the water, and at Loleta; while a friend of his, known (because of a brilliantly-hued nose) as "Currant Jelly," was near him, ready to lend a hand in case of need; but only then, as Uncle Billy and Sam were understood to be sailing the "Pretty Sally" this day.

Doctor Jasper, with a white cap pulled well down over his forehead, sat apart from the others, watching the arrow-straight wake of foam as it melted away behind them. He turned presently to Uncle Billy and inquired as to the depth of water.

"Can't say as ter here'bouts, Doctor Jarsper. But ter match well with ther harbor, it must be consider'ble."

"How deep is it in the harbor?"

"Sixty foot an' over, purty much ev'rywhere."

"Pretty deep water, that, Uncle Billy."

"Yes," the old man said. "There is a mighty deal o' water goes ter ther mekin' o' this here harbor, 'specially when it comes ter fall storms, with ther wind blowin' big guns."

They were interrupted by a sharp exclamation from Mrs. Bessly, who, while engaged in looking after things in general, had a particular eye to the welfare of Captain Jack.

"Set still, my precious, now do! Ye're as restless as the brass fish atop the town-house, thet whirls 'round in ev'ry breeze thet blows!"

This was after she had made a wild clutch at the child, who now came clambering back to her from

his third or fourth trip to Sam Ayres' place above the cockpit.

He laughed in his own gleeful way; and Margaret said, "I guess somebody is very happy to-day."

"Who, — the fish up on the town-house?" he asked quickly, a roguish twinkle in his eyes, as he looked into her smiling face.

She tried to appear serious. "Now, Jacques, would you be happy, if you were nailed to a rod?"

"But I 'm not brass, like the fish; and so it would hurt me."

"And when you are hurt, you are not happy?" She had taken him by the chin, the better to hold his attention.

He looked at her intently, and puckered his forehead as though endeavoring to fathom an abstruse problem.

"No, Miss Margot," he answered softly; "I do think nobody can be happy when they are hurted." And his eyes sought Loleta, who was looking at him wistfully.

She had been very quiet from the time they started, sitting with her small gloved hands clasped in her lap, and her eyes, under the shading brim of her straw sailor hat, glancing back nervously, now and then, toward the fast receding shore.

Just before starting, her reply to Margaret's anxious questionings was that she was well, and that nothing was the matter. But her lovely face was paler than usual, and she seemed to be laboring under some strain which she was trying to suppress, and from which she might hope for relief in her

present surroundings and the anticipated pleasures of the day.

Doctor Jasper had taken careful note of this, his own feelings and intuitions making his professional senses all the more acute; and, concluding that something was troubling the girl, he refrained from intruding himself upon her attention more than was necessary.

To judge from his attitude and looks, he might have been supposed to be listening. But the fact was that he had been paying but slight heed to what was going on about him.

His mind was filled with new thoughts, — new feelings and hopes; these last, to be sure, vague, as yet, but seeming to assume more definite form each time his eyes rested upon the beautiful face of Loleta Harwood.

He had begun to realize the wonderful delight he found in being near her, — to be near her even when — as now — she was silent and *distrait*, seemingly unconscious of his presence.

He had, since their first meeting, been making a study of the girl, and, by comparing her with women he already knew, trying to place her in the proper niche. But there was so little about her that he had ever seen in the others, and so much that they lacked; she was so entirely distinct and unusual in her individuality; there seemed to be so much to mystify and evade him, that he finally gave up the idea of placing her anywhere except upon a pedestal, apart from and above any woman he had ever met.

She recalled the description of Petrarch's Laura, — "A nature that reposed upon its own fine sensations." He felt satisfied that her face was a frank expression of her mind, and he accepted its loveliness and delicacy as typifying her inborn refinement, and purity of soul.

Yet his knowledge of humanity told him that her nature had another side, and one it would be well not to awaken. And he easily imagined how those wondrous eyes could flash, those sensitive nostrils dilate, that gentle voice ring out, were anything to arouse the tigress he felt assured lay sleeping within her.

Presently they were all watching a clumsy-looking craft crossing their way ahead, with sails steady enough to have belonged to a painted canvas.

Uncle Billy, glancing at it, had announced, "Thet 's ther ' Black-Eyed Susan.' "

And Margaret's eyes twinkled as she asked, "Where is her ' Sweet William,' Uncle Billy?"

"Eh, — where 's her who, Miss Marg'ret?" inquired the old man in turn, and appearing perplexed. "What 's thet ye said?"

"Why, Uncle Billy," she answered laughingly, "you surely remember Sweet William,

> "'— high upon the yard,
> Rocked by the billows to and fro.'

Don't you remember?"

"Oh, him; it 's him ye mean, be it? Aye, aye."

His air of briskness was palpably assumed; and it was plain that he was trying to recall the memory

of some old shipmate to whom he supposed she was referring.

Here young Sam bawled out, "There 's Cap'n Tanner's 'Black-Eyed Susan,' Uncle Billy!"

"As I was jest a-sayin'," the old man shouted back, a touch of sarcasm in his gruff voice. Then, happening to glance over his shoulder, he remarked, "Here we be goin' past Danger-Head, Doctor Jarsper."

"I guess you say that to aggravate me," was the Doctor's reply, as he looked toward the rocky island. "You know I have always wanted to land there, and explore the place."

"Have you?" exclaimed Margaret. "And so have I. I have always been crazy to set foot upon that terrible-looking rock. Let us try it when we 're coming back, Uncle Billy. It will be dead low tide this afternoon, and just the chance we want. Don't you say so, Loleta?"

"I should like — " Loleta began.

But Mrs. Bessly, who had not deigned to turn herself about to look at the frowning rock-pile, said excitedly, "Land-sakes, Marg'ret! Now don't ye do it, or even think o' doin' it. It 's awesome 'nough to look at, 'thout goin' onto it."

"But just think of our all living here so long, and sailing by it so often, and yet never landing there," Margaret answered, with a little note of impatience. "I, for one, propose to go there to-day. And you 'll take me, won't you, Uncle Billy?"

She looked at the old man in a way that, had he been forty years younger, would have left him no

volition in the matter. As it was, he seemed very uneasy, and glanced at the Doctor, as if for help. But none came, and he began, although feebly, to remonstrate.

"Now ye see, Miss Marg'ret, Doctor Jarsper 'll tell ye it won't do for leddies ter—"

But she cut him short. "Indeed he will tell me nothing of the kind, for he knows I would pay no attention to it." And there was something of defiance in the look she shot at the Doctor.

But he only smiled good-naturedly. "Don't worry about that, Miss Margaret, for I 'll do all I can to get you there; especially as I would like to get upon it myself."

"There now, Uncle Billy!" And Margaret nodded triumphantly at the old sailor, who said nothing, but grunted dismally and shook his head.

Mrs. Bessly now interposed, saying by way of compromise, "Well, we 'll see 'bout it when we come back; for we surely can't go nigh the place now."

"Now — now!" Uncle Billy echoed the word with scornful disapproval. "Not in them breakers. I should say not, as any one with half an eye could see. We 'd be pounded ter pieces in less 'n no time, like a bit o' wet paper you 'd put yer finger through. Ther time to do it" — and he now affected an air of resignation — "is when we come back; an' we must manage ter strike it at low tide or there-'bouts. Then we 'll hev ter stand off with ther 'Pretty Sally' a couple o' hundred yards or so, an' go ashore in ther small boat. I 'll tek ye myself,

for I 'd never trust no one else with ye an' ther boat 'round them rocks."

"Well," said Margaret, "you 've been there before, for you 've told me so. And I guess you can put us ashore all right."

Loleta had been listening rather interestedly, the talk, and what it promised, seeming to divert her thoughts.

"Uncle Billy," she now inquired, "were you ever really on Danger-Head?"

"Wa'l, yes, Miss. When I was a young man, seven of us went there for larks on ther rocks. But" — with a suggestive shake of the head — "we did n't stay there for long."

"Why not?" queried Margaret, her face alight with curiosity.

Uncle Billy rubbed the back of his head, knocking his ancient hat over one ear in a most rakish fashion, before he answered irresponsively, "Wa'l, — it 's a fearsome sort o' place, an' no mistek."

"Yes; we all know that," said Doctor Jasper, smiling quizzically. "We all know that, Uncle Billy. But did you see anything or find anything? That 's what we are after now."

"No-o," the old man acknowledged finally, but with apparent reluctance; adding, however, as a reason, "but we did n't try very hard ter find anythin' out o' ther common."

"What is it that has given the place such a bad name?" the Doctor continued more seriously. "It seems to be surrounded by an atmosphere of mystery and terror, as though it were a sort of

'bugaboo.' But who knows anything positive in regard to it?"

"Wa'l," Uncle Billy answered slowly, "ever sence I kin rec'lect anythin' I mind hearin' 'bout sounds o' queer cries an' whistles comin' over ther water from Danger-Head at night-times."

"An' so hev I," chimed in Mrs. Bessly. "An' there's always been tales of it's bein' used for smugglin', an' hidin' away goods. An' some folks say the pirates used to come there with their plunder, in past times, an' store it away for safe-keepin'."

"Yes; thet's all so," assented Uncle Billy, while she was gathering her breath for another chapter. "Ye see, Doctor Jarsper, 'bout all ther young fellers o' ther town went off v'yagin' as soon as they got big 'nough. Thet was ther main end of a man's life; an' ter get atop it was a thing callin' for steady an' wearin' work. So there was suthin' for 'em ter do 'sides prowlin' 'round their own back-doors ter find out ther truth o' sech yarns as was told 'bout Danger-Head. An' so, ye see, Doctor, they never inwestigated 'em."

The old man's thoughts seemed to have taken a retrospective turn, and a note of sadness was in his voice as he went on, "I tell ye, Doctor Jarsper, thet sailors now'days ain't ther men, an' ships ain't ther craft, they used ter be when I fust took ter goin' ter sea. Ther ships ain't nothin' but a lot o' iron an' steel, chock-a-block with machinery an' all sorts o' flubdubs; an' as for ther sailors — they ain't nothin' but a lot o' slobs."

No one — not even Mrs. Bessly — seemed inclined

to question the truth of this broad indictment; and Uncle Billy appeared to feel considerably better for having uttered it.

Indeed nothing was said for a time, while they all watched the frowning pile of Danger-Head fall off to leeward, the sea lashing into spume as it rose and fell against its rough sides, while now and again a greater height of flying spray would go crying up into the caverns, there to meet an oncoming mass, soaring toward it with a stormy rush. And this increasing volume of water, pressed between the narrow walls, sent up vast showers of foam, from which the drops flew like glinting hailstones, as the light flashed through them.

"Oh, it is very dreadful, I do think," Loleta murmured at last, as if to herself.

And Captain Jack, who had not taken his eyes from the gloomy-looking pile of rocks, asked solemnly, "Don't you think, Uncle Billy, that a dragon does have his home there?"

"Ther good Laird forbid!" ejaculated the old man, with simulated terror. But he added reassuringly, as if to remove any fears he might have awakened in the child's mind, "Ye see, my lad, dragons don't live nowheres 'cept in England, 'long o' Saint George. This here climate would n't suit 'em, noways."

Danger-Head had receded until it resembled nothing so much as the crown — and a very black crown — of the typical "caubeen," supposed to be worn by Paddy when upon his native soil. The sea was blue and peaceful, dimpled with glintings of sunshine.

And when they reached Skuttle-Hump the last tip of Danger-Head was gone.

Uncle Billy's passengers were soon ashore; and then Sam rowed back for the old man and "Currant Jelly," who had been making things snug aboard the sloop.

Soon after Uncle Billy had joined the others, he turned to Mrs. Bessly, and announced with unusual dignity, "Now, Marm Bessly, I be goin' ter mek ther chowder."

"Oh, ye be, be ye?" And she gave a disdainful sniff, indicative of doubts as to his ability.

"Thet I be," he replied loftily; "an' Sam 'll know how ter do all ther helpin' I 'll need. So, Marm, d' ye please mek yerself ter home, an' enj'y yerself with ther rest of 'em, down on ther shore."

She took him at his word, and was soon seated upon one of the few scattered rocks, well embedded in the narrow strip of beach encircling the little island, while she permitted Captain Jack to make himself happy by burying her feet in the sand, — by no means a slight task, so far as concerned the quantity of material to be handled.

Doctor Jasper and the two girls, glad to be released from the confinement of the boat, were strolling leisurely along the edge of the water, idly watching its ever-changing effects, when young Sam came to announce the completion of Uncle Billy's chowder.

The members of the little party were not long in gathering around the capacious kettle, while the old man, ladle in hand, prepared to do the

honors as soon as "Currant Jelly" had distributed the plates.

Mrs. Bessly examined her steaming portion critically. Then, after tasting it, she gave an audible sniff, meanwhile stirring the savory mess vigorously with her spoon.

"Uncle Billy," she said, "this is muddled-head."

"O' course, — what else?" he grunted, looking down at her rather aggressively.

"Well," — and her tone was slightly sarcastic, — "'t ain't exactly what I call 'chowder,' 'though I 'll own it 's quite tasty, considerin'." With this she partook of a second spoonful.

"Considerin' what?" Uncle Billy demanded, his face a tinge redder, if possible, than from his labors over the fire.

"Oh, nothin'," was the evasive reply.

"Thank ye, Marm," he said, with a grim politeness which seemed to trouble her a little; for, as if wishing to declare a truce, she remarked, after sampling it once more, —

"It tastes jest like what I mek myself."

Then she seemed to be gathering her forces again; for, looking at him intently, she added, "I 've med it the same way for years, by the receipt Sally Hanson gave me."

The old man appeared quite uneasy, and muttered something the others could not hear.

"Ye mind Sally, Uncle Billy? O' course ye do."

There was a sly insinuation sounding in Mrs. Bessly's voice, which caught the attention of Doc-

tor Jasper and the girls, who stopped their own talk, and seemed to be listening.

Uncle Billy noticed this, and looked at Mrs. Bessly with a distinct spark of anger in his eyes, as he blurted out, "O' course I do, not hevin' growed old 'nough ter lose my own mind." But he hastened to change the subject, by calling the Doctor's attention to a schooner sailing past.

The gypsy-like meal was soon finished, and the girls went down to the shore with Captain Jack and Sam, while Doctor Jasper, pausing first to light a cigar, followed slowly after them.

Mrs. Bessly seemed inclined to remain where she was, upon a piece of rock, chewing a blade of grass ruminatingly, while Uncle Billy and "Currant Jelly" were getting together the pans and dishes.

Presently she said, looking up at the old man, as he stood near her, "Uncle Billy, I wonder, speakin' o' Sally Hanson, thet ye've never got married in all these years."

"Sho'," he replied, coloring up again, and glancing uneasily over his shoulder, as if to be assured of the increasing distance between themselves and Doctor Jasper's retreating form.

Mrs. Bessly's face grew stern. "Ye need n't say 'Sho' to an old 'quaintance like me. Don't I mind the ring ye fired through Sally Hanson's door one Valentine's day? Carnelian, it was, with a heart on it; an' it was wrapped in a piece o' paper thet hed verses writ on it."

He tried to grin; but the effort was a failure, and

ended by his lowering his shaggy eyebrows, as if he was in deep thought, and seeking to recall the incident of which she had spoken.

After a little by-play of this sort, which Mrs. Bessly watched with a smile of keen derision, the old man said, "Now thet ye speak of it, it seems ter me I mind suthin' o' ther matter. An' I remember copyin' them varses out'n a book she used ter like ter read."

"Ye did n't ever s'pose any one thought ye med 'em up yerself, did ye?" Mrs. Bessly asked with marked sarcasm. "I 've read 'em lots o' times, an' b'lieve I can speak 'em now."

"Never mind, — don't ye!" Uncle Billy protested, in a very weak-sounding voice. And he began to look around in a helpless way, as if meditating flight.

Mrs. Bessly's only reply was to take the grass from her mouth and throw it aside with a violence suggestive of its being something excessively hateful, as she repeated in a high-pitched, sing-song voice, —

> "Green be the turf above thee,
> Friend of my better days;
> None knew thee but to love thee,
> Nor named thee but to praise."

A broad smile came to her face as she added, "I mind how peppery Sally was when she read 'em; for she said ye seemed to want her dead an' buried 'fore her time."

"It were only ther last two lines I meant," Uncle Billy tried to explain; "an' somehow they did n't look ship-shape, settin' sail all by theirselves, 'thout they was in ther wake o' t' other two."

With this he turned his back to her, and gazed out over the water, while a peculiar look gathered in his eyes.

Mrs. Bessly watched him, and the smile slowly left her face. Then she arose and strolled away to join the others, down on the beach, while the old man went off in another direction.

"I guess she's thinkin' ter set her cap for Uncle Billy!"

This was from the unnoticed but discerning "Currant Jelly," in a confidential way to himself. And the idea so tickled his fancy that he began to laugh, just as young Sam came up and threw his long length upon the grass.

"What's the matter?" he inquired. "What be ye laughin' at?"

Then, when "Currant Jelly" had described the little passage (referring to it as a "scrap") between Mrs. Bessly and Uncle Billy, the two laughed in chorus, rolling about in the grass like light-hearted school-boys.

CHAPTER XIV

THE far-away murmuring of the sea was like the sound one hears in a huge shell, held close to the ear. And the breeze buffeting the stiff grasses, where an occasional grasshopper was shrilling his note, brought the sound of Loleta's singing from down on the shore:

> "Scores of travellers come and go;
> All may linger, but one may stay,
> Cease from wandering to and fro,
> Rest for many a summer day."

But it was not "Currant Jelly" and young Sam Ayres who heard the words. It was Doctor Jasper, who had urged the girl to sing "The Armorer's Daughter," while Margaret, chin in her palm, sat looking away with dream-filled eyes over the limitless sea.

Farther along the shore Mrs. Bessly was building sand-houses with Captain Jack, and decorating them gayly with pebbles and bits of shells.

"Ah, what a happy day!"

Margaret spoke with a sigh in her voice, as the last note of Loleta's song died away.

"So very, very happy," Loleta echoed, with a curious little shiver that caused Dr. Jasper to look at her in a fashion noticed only by Margaret's quick

eyes. Then he sighed in turn, and smoked fast and furiously.

It was a very quiet sea at which they were looking. The tide was on the ebb, with but little wind stirring; and the green water ran frothily upon the beach as the lessening waves came curving in with glass-clear backs.

Uncle Billy came along presently and remarked as to the condition of the wind and tide; and what he said caused Margaret to start up from her comfortable lounging, as she exclaimed, "Oh, then, don't let us leave so late that we 'll not have plenty of time for Danger-Head!"

"So ye 've med up yer mind ter thet, Miss Marg'ret," the old man queried, as she stood smiling teasingly into his troubled face, nodding her curly head as she put on the cap she had been swinging in her left hand, while the other one, resting on her hip, gave her somewhat of a defiant air.

"Aye, aye, then," he said resignedly, turning away. "I s'pose it 's time we was gettin' ready ter mek a start." And he rolled off to summon young Sam and "Currant Jelly" and have them row aboard with the "truck," as he called the chowder cooking and serving impedimenta.

The sun was sending long beams of light across sea and land, for the afternoon was now well along. The grasshoppers' song was getting louder and more continuous; the singers more numerous. And each one of the little party felt regretfully that the "happy day" was fast drawing to a close.

"Good times and happy days always seem to go

so much faster than the other sort," said Margaret, half to herself, as she was handed aboard the "Pretty Sally."

"I do think the other sort do never go — for some!"

Loleta had heard Margaret's sadly-uttered words, and spoke with a sudden, intense bitterness that made the other girl and Doctor Jasper turn and look at her inquiringly. But, if she noticed this, she paid no attention to it, being occupied in getting out some soft wraps, for the air was beginning to have a coolness in it.

Nothing more was said; but the Doctor saw how the droop had returned to her mouth, and that same weary expression to her eyes.

This made him conscious of a strong feeling of resentment against some one or something — he knew not whom nor what; but he wondered if it were possible that Madame Harwood could be unkind to her granddaughter.

They were now under way; and presently Captain Jack held up a wriggling grasshopper, which Loleta was urging him to let go.

"But he crawled on me, and I did catch him," the child explained, as though this were sufficient reason for holding on to his visitor.

"Yes, but you will surely let him go now," said Loleta. "See him twist; you must be hurting him. How would you like it that a great giant should catch you by one leg and hold you in the air?"

"I 'm sure I would keep still, Loleta; and then I would not be hurted," was the ready reply.

"Yes; but the poor grasshopper cannot think, as you can, and he must be frightened. See his poor legs, — so little and thin!"

"I don't want to hurt him," the child declared. "But I do guess I'll put him away under the seat; and then when we get home I will let him skip off into the grass."

"Then he'll probably tell the other grasshoppers about the wonderful island of Skuttle-Hump," said Doctor Jasper, smiling at the boy; "and how he was caught by a great big giant, who held him up in the air by one leg. And they will all think your grasshopper is a mighty traveller from foreign lands."

Captain Jack laughed merrily as he deposited the insect carefully under the seat, while Mrs. Bessly, as though the Doctor's remark had reminded her of something, inquired if he had ever read Pelton's travels.

"No," he replied; "not that I remember."

"I did, last winter," she went on to say; "an' it was *thet* interestin'. I'm more 'n sorry, d'ye know, as I grow older, to think I never took none o' the chances I hed when I was young, to go to Indy."

Here Uncle Billy called Loleta's attention to the end of one of her wraps, streaming out, and threatening to get too near the water.

As she leaned forward to catch it, Doctor Jasper reached out and drew it toward her, and their hands, for the first time, met.

Her own was ungloved; and the light contact of her soft fingers thrilled him strangely.

"Thank you," was all she said; and he was happy

in having been able to do something — even so little — for her.

"If the missionaries can ever git them heathen women to quit burnin' theirselves up with their husbands," Mrs. Bessly continued, her mind still dwelling upon India, "they 'll hev done somethin' worth talkin' 'bout. I never heerd o' sech wicked craziness — never! Ketch me, I say, burnin' myself up in any sech way!" And she gave a mild snort of indignation.

Uncle Billy had been looking at her fixedly, and his thoughts must have been very much out of the common; for as she finished, he muttered, "Blow me!" and turning his head, actually sacrificed a freshly-stowed quid.

They were now drawing closer to Danger-Head, which had for some time lifted its shoulders of jagged rock out of the level of heaving waters ahead; and it was not long before the anchor of the "Pretty Sally" was thrown out, and the little craft dipping gentle courtesies to the gloomy-looking pile only a few hundred yards away.

"What are you going to Danger-Head for, Uncle Billy?" inquired Captain Jack, as the old man dropped nimbly into the dory he had drawn alongside.

It had been decided to leave the child on board the sloop; and Loleta had easily persuaded him to remain with young Sam and "Currant Jelly."

"Wa'l, — f'r instance, I guess; an' thet 's 'bout ther truth," Uncle Billy drawled out, his shaggy brows meeting in a deep scowl as he worked at one of the

oars, which, as Mrs. Bessly expressed it, was "actin' up," by reason of a thole-pin being out of proper gear.

The child looked puzzled at this vague answer, but said no more, as Loleta, preparing to follow Margaret, paused to drop a kiss on his cheek.

"We will be gone only a short time, Jacques," she said; "and when I do get back you shall know all about it. You will be a good *bébé*, and stay here with Sam."

"I 'd like to stay myself, so I would," Mrs. Bessly declared, as she gathered her skirts preparatory to taking her place in the dory. "But I know, Marg'ret, thet your pa, an' Madam, would n't never forgive me if I let you two girls do sech a thing, an' I not be 'long with ye. But mind, both o' ye, — if anythin' happens, I tell ye now, once for all, I wash my hands o' the hull responsibility. I don't want none o' ye to go; an' so I tell ye."

"But nothing is going to happen, Bess," said Margaret gayly, from her place in front of Uncle Billy, who, for the first time in his life, refused to return her smile, but appeared even more depressed than before.

"It ain't ther sort o' place ter call up very cheerful feelin's," he remarked a few minutes later, glancing over his shoulder at the rocky front they were slowly approaching.

"That 's true, Uncle Billy; it *does* seem rather lonesome," Margaret admitted in a low voice as they all looked at the sombre mass, its towering blackness now beginning to rear itself above their heads, and then

to creep out, and over them, until it was as if they were floating under a rocky sky.

Everything was becoming more shadowy and mysterious; even the darkened water had an uncanny sound, as it lapped the shelving granite.

"It is indeed awful," Loleta murmured; while Doctor Jasper looked around with increasing interest, but said nothing.

"Shall I row back out'n here then, Miss Marg'ret?" asked Uncle Billy, with marked alacrity, and resting upon his oars.

"Oh, no — the idea!" she exclaimed; and Doctor Jasper added, "Certainly not. We could n't think of giving up our cherished scheme now, when we are so near its attainment." And so the old man rowed on.

There was a steady breeze from the south and southwest, with a gentle swell rolling slowly from that quarter, this being something Uncle Billy noticed with not over-pleased eyes. The water around them, pitchy from the shadow of the overhanging cliffs, sank suddenly in great hollows, to rise again with a sullen slowness that gave time to see the bulwark of rock that ran down, a sheer wall of wet blackness, into the depths beneath.

"Ye'll not stop long ashore, will ye, Miss Marg'ret? Don't let her, Doctor Jarsper, if ye can help it."

Uncle Billy's gruff voice had a wheedling note. But his appeal met with no response; and he went on searching for the iron ring he expected to find bolted to the rock.

It was soon found, — a very large and heavy affair, and colored, from its many coatings of rust, like an oak leaf in autumn.

Doctor Jasper, under the old man's direction, now grasped the low, shelving rock, and sprang upon it. Then, while Uncle Billy lay firmly on his oars, he assisted the others from the boat.

"Oh, land-sakes! How be we ever goin' to git off'n this ag'in?" Mrs. Bessly inquired shrilly.

Although she addressed no one in particular, Uncle Billy was not slow in replying to her question. He had not forgotten their *rencontre* at Skuttle-Hump; and the opportunity now presented was one not to be lost.

"I 'm thinkin', Marm," he said, speaking in a disjointed fashion, for he was now out of the boat, and stooping to secure the painter to the iron ring, "I 'm thinkin' it 'll be with our legs, much ther same way as we 've got on."

She cast a disdainful glance at his broad back, and then, with much dignity, turned and picked her way amongst the loosened bits of rock to a farther-away ledge, where Doctor Jasper and the two girls were already standing.

The great mass of granite lifted itself like a watch-tower of gigantic proportions set amid many smaller structures; and between some of these there ran what looked like a path.

It was sprinkled here and there with sand, that gleamed white in the darkness cast by the rocks overhead; and all about lay tangled bits of sea-moss, shells, and pieces of wreckage.

Uncle Billy, puffing a little from his exertions, soon joined the others.

"Jest foller me," he said, taking the lead, "as I s'pose ye must see all ther sights. But, for ther matter o' thet, they 're mostly 'bout ye now. But then there 's ther cave it 's said smugglers used years back; an' thet I know is ther end o' this here path."

They toiled silently after him up the narrow way that seemed to lead straight to the topmost peak. But, when almost there, it took a sharp turn to the left, and disappeared around some rocks.

Upon reaching this point they found that Uncle Billy had vanished, and while they stood wondering, his voice was heard, sounding from the hollow depths below, and telling them to come on.

"He must have gone down under these rocks," said Doctor Jasper, as he now took the lead.

"I 've heerd tell there was a cave here," remarked Mrs. Bessly, who brought up the rear of the little procession; "but I never b'lieved it."

"Were you never here before?" Loleta asked, as they went slowly forward.

"Never; an' never 'll be ag'in, if I know myself," was the emphatic reply. "I 've hed no sech hankerin'; an' I don't guess the rest o' the folks has, neither. The men hev been away to sea, an' women-folks in town hev been too busy to bother 'bout it."

They had been going down, winding in and out among the rocks; and her voice had a weird sound, mingling as it did with the roar of the water dashing against the north side of the island.

They soon came upon Uncle Billy, and found themselves in what appeared to be a narrow passage, with glistening white sand underfoot, the jagged rocks making a wall upon either side, and hanging so low above them that Doctor Jasper was obliged to stoop as he passed along.

The light from the opening, and through tiny clefts overhead, stole in with a subdued softness; and the sound of the waves seemed farther away, like the echo of a distant sea.

"I am quite convinced," said the Doctor, turning to the others, "that Uncle Billy is leading us into the presence of a goblin, or some other fearful thing, such as we have never seen. Now, Miss Margaret, I wonder who the goblin will gobble first, — you or Miss Harwood?"

"For the land-sakes, Doctor, don't be talkin' so," urged Mrs. Bessly, who was looking uncomfortable. "The place is fearsome 'nough anyhow; an' sech talk don't mek it any cheerier. I can jest feel the cold chills start at my heels, an' work up my back, to the top hair o' my head."

"Don't be alarmed, Mrs. Bessly; I'll promise to protect you," laughed the Doctor. "You see I can easily fly back to the boat with you; for I am very sure it will be either Miss Harwood or Miss Margaret whom the goblin will take. You know it is always innocent young maidens who are demanded in the *menu* of mythical animals."

The general drift of the Doctor's remarks, to say nothing of some of the words he used, evidently threw the good woman off her bearings, for she

remained silent; and Loleta asked, as she looked about her, "Why do you not say a lovely mermaid does live here?"

"Yes, or even a number of them," Margaret added laughingly; "or the queen of them all, who, if we could see her, would grant us three wishes."

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Bessly, who had again brought herself to her proper course, "mine 'd be to be home in my own kitchen in jest about one jiffy!"

"No, Bess,— no such thing," Margaret said, still laughing. "You would wish for a treasure ship, and so would I, for you, so that you could sit down and take things easy for the rest of your life, and —"

Her voice trailed away into the increasing gloom, as they reached still darker depths among the rocks.

Uncle Billy, who had again disappeared a few minutes before, was now heard shouting to them.

"Say, Doctor Jarsper, please look an' mek sure ye 've got some matches. I ain't got none left; an' mebbe yé 'll want ter strike a bit o' light for ther leddies, when ye come ter where I be."

The Doctor relieved the old man's anxiety; and then, followed by the others, pushed along.

They soon came to a door-like opening, which they passed through, and went around another short turn, to descend several ridges that seemed like steps cut into the rock. They were obliged to walk slowly, their movements being guided by Uncle Billy's voice, now heard farther away, and as if coming from somewhere within the earth.

When they at length reached him, they found themselves in a funnel-shaped chamber, rock-walled and roofed, with a sanded floor. The light, dim and veiled, was sufficient to show the utter wildness of the place.

After they had finished looking about, Uncle Billy led them around the corner of one of the walls, where, through an aperture resembling a window, they could look down some eight or ten feet to a smaller cavern, over whose sandy floor a faint light was diffused, glimmering from unseen crevices in the rocky ceiling. And as they stood here in silence they heard the sea's hoarse murmurings along the walls without, like the roll of far-off thunder.

The girls clung to each other as they looked down, Uncle Billy having called their attention to what appeared to be bits of packing-cases, and a stave or two, which he took to be evidences of "smugglin' goin's on."

"I wish we could get down there," said Margaret, a half-formed intention showing itself in her voice.

"Oh, land-sakes, Marg'ret, don't ye think o' doin' sech a thing," Mrs. Bessly remonstrated. "Do come along now, Uncle Billy; let's start back." And she went so far as to pull the old man's sleeve.

"And so it seems that no ogre makes his headquarters here, after all," said Doctor Jasper, as he looked around.

"Ugh!" grunted Uncle Billy. "Surely, Doctor Jarsper, ye never s'posed anybody hed an abidin' place here'bouts?"

"I did n't know but that perhaps some one might be here," the Doctor replied soberly, and in a speculative tone.

And the two girls could not help laughing at the puzzled expression upon Uncle Billy's face as he made haste to say, "No, sir; this wa'n't never fit for ther 'bidin' place of anythin', — man or beast."

"Unless it might be the mermaid Loleta mentioned," Margaret suggested gravely.

"Or why not the old sea-king — Neptune himself," added Loleta, with seeming seriousness. And Doctor Jasper felt a sudden happiness to see the sparkle that came to the girl's eyes, and the smile dimpling about the corners of her lips, putting to flight all their downward curving.

Uncle Billy's mind was evidently devoid of frivolity, either of imagination or language; for, after looking at them gravely, he muttered, "Wa'l, — I 'm flabbergasted!"

"The noise of the sea outside does sound to me like voices; do not you think so? It is like many, many voices, singing down in the depths. And it does sound very lonely."

Loleta spoke abruptly, after a moment's silence, while she and Margaret leaned through the opening once more, to take another look down at the tell-tale débris on the floor of the cavern below them.

Her words were addressed to no one; but they made Doctor Jasper turn quickly toward her.

Her face gleamed like a pearl; and the sadness of her voice was accentuated by the curious reverberation.

"It does," he said, without taking his eyes from her face. "It sounds like 'the voice of the Great Creator,' that little Paul Dombey heard. And it surely must speak to all of us as it spoke to him."

This brought Mrs. Bessly to the front again. "Now I'm goin' straight out'n here; an' if the rest o' ye want to stay, an' keep on talkin' dretful, I s'pose ye may hev the privilege to pick an' choose yer own hair-raisin' enj'yment."

She turned to go, when Uncle Billy laid a detaining hand upon her arm.

"One minute, Marm," he said, with unmistakable decision. "I'll tek ther pilotin' o' this here craft, if ye please, Marm Bessly." Then, looking at the others, he asked, "Ye've seen enough, ain't ye?"

"Yes, — until next time," answered Margaret gayly.

But Mrs. Bessly muttered, "There'll be no next time for me, if I know it. One dose o' this is 'nough to last the rest o' my born days."

"Well, I must admit," said the Doctor, as they began moving along in Indian file, — "I must admit that at times of high tides, and when rough winds blow, with the sea roaring and howling about the place, I should not care particularly to be down in that lowest cave."

"O' course not, — nor anybody else, if they'd own up, honest, an' say jest what they think."

Mrs. Bessly now spoke rather more cheerfully, probably because they were retracing their steps, and she felt also that Doctor Jasper was somewhat

in accord with her in regard to certain features of Danger-Head.

"Do you suppose the tide ever manages to get in here, Uncle Billy?" inquired Margaret.

"Nary time," he answered, without turning his head. "Nary, bless ye. Why, Miss Marg'ret, thet sand down there 's affidavy to an old sailor's eye thet it 's tight as ther hair on a dog. There 's nary a drop o' tide, high or low, ever got in 'tween-decks o' ther low place, or ther place where we stood."

A few minutes later, and the last turn was made, bringing them out into the light, which at first seemed strangely green, and dazzled their eyes as they looked about them.

Off to their right would arise a sharp little shower of spray, followed by the swift rush of a wave pouring through the rifts. And this, after falling upon the rocks with a roar that filled their ears with echoes, seemed to halt, as though the waters were restrained in their fury by the grim barriers; then the smaller streams would go tinkling back — back and down into the darkness beneath.

"This sou'west wind 's a hurryin' up ther tide; an' it 's comin' fast," Uncle Billy said rather nervously.

This was sufficient to reawaken Mrs. Bessly's fears, and her voice, as well.

"Let 's hurry up an' git out o' this place. I feel as if we 'd all be drownded corpses if we don't git away pretty quick."

They hastened forward until the sea lay before them once more, glistening with many colors, and tossing its cloud-shadows from wave to wave. The

sails of a passing craft showed like yellow silk in the primrose light, and the water about the "Pretty Sally" seemed eddying with sparkles.

Suddenly there was heard a sharp exclamation from Uncle Billy, as he clambered hurriedly down the rocks to where the dory was fastened; and Mrs. Bessly, stopping short, clasped her hands, as she said in a half triumphant, "Did n't-I-tell-you-so?" voice, "There, now!"

"What is it?" Doctor Jasper asked quickly. He was standing lower down on the rocks, a little back of the others; and raising his head, he tried to look over Mrs. Bessly's not over-narrow shoulders toward the ledge where Uncle Billy stood, hands in pockets, gazing intently at something within the little boat.

"Tide 's stove a hole in her; thet 's what," the old man answered ruefully, without removing his eyes from the spot in the boat's side, where the water was coming in.

The others looked at each other without speaking, and with varying expressions. Doctor Jasper's eyes happened to be resting upon Loleta's face; and it seemed to him that her beauty showed in a new light, her look of amazement being brightened by the gleam of Margaret's laughter reflected in her eyes.

Mrs. Bessly was, as usual, the first to utter her thoughts.

"Now, Uncle Billy, what *be* we to do?" she asked despairingly.

The old man remained silent, and Doctor Jasper said, "What do you advise, Uncle Billy? How are we to get back to the sloop?"

Uncle Billy, as was his habit when perplexed, proceeded to rub the back of his head, until his hat became perched over one eye, causing him to assume the rakish air already mentioned. Then, looking up, he replied with much deliberation, "Wa'l, Doctor Jarsper, ye see I might row ye out one at a time, if thet one 'd keep bailin', an' took no offence at wet feet. But there ain't time for more 'n two sech trips, an' mebbe only one, as ther tide rises dretful fast here'bouts; an' ye can see for yerself how it 's comin' in. Ther wind 's drawin' 'round a bit nor'ardly, an' briskin' at thet; an' so it 'll bring ther water up all ther faster an' rougher. An' so" — now speaking with decision — "no sech trips is ter be thought on; for I might not be able ter get back here myself, onc't I left for ther sloop."

"Oh, no, Uncle Billy!" exclaimed Margaret, now looking alarmed. "You must not leave this place without taking all of us with you."

She spoke hurriedly and earnestly, the laughter gone from her eyes, as it was from Loleta's.

"Not I, my lass," was the assuring reply. "I 'll hail Sam, an' tell him ter sail home for 'nother boat; an' then he 'll come an' tek us all off when ther tide 's low ag'in. Ther only bad thing be this — we 'll hev ter mek up our minds ter be content with Danger-Head for a sleepin'-place."

He turned toward the sloop, and making a trumpet of his big brown hands, sent a mighty shout over the water, — one that quickly brought a responsive bellow from Sam, who could be seen standing

in sharp silhouette against the glory of sunset about the "Pretty Sally."

Presently, after a duet of shouts, Uncle Billy's becoming still more megaphone-like in quality, those on board the sloop signified that they understood the situation, and could be seen making preparations to sail away.

Just before they started, Loleta said, "Please, Uncle Billy, ask Sam to tell grandmère himself, so that she will on no account feel alarmed."

"Yes," Margaret added hastily; "and have him tell papa, too, — have him go to the house himself."

And Mrs. Bessly came in with this suggestion, made with all the grimness and irony of which her manner and voice were capable: "An' while he's about it, Uncle Billy, he might jest as well go up an' tell Eph an' Jane, so they won't be thinkin' o' dividin' my worldly goods 'tween theirselves, thinkin' I'm gone over Jordan."

This was entirely lost upon the old man; for having roared forth his final instructions, he turned his back upon the "Pretty Sally," and, declining Doctor Jasper's aid, hauled the dory up on the rocks, away from the incoming tide. This done, and having emptied the water from the boat, they both climbed to where Mrs. Bessly and the two girls had withdrawn to avoid the spray flying in over the lower ledges.

Uncle Billy sat down, and inquired if any one would object to his lighting his pipe.

Loleta smiled, and shook her head, while Mar-

garet answered with a hearty "Of course not." But there was a look of protest in Mrs. Bessly's eyes.

This the old man failed to observe, or, if he did, it was much the same thing; for he took the matches Doctor Jasper handed him, and having lit his pipe, smoked away complacently, as they all watched the fast disappearing sail of the "Pretty Sally."

No one spoke, until Uncle Billy took the pipe from his mouth, and waving it comprehensively, said in an encouraging way, "'Though ther wind is briskin' a bit, there's nothin' to worry us in ther shape an' weight of it. It 'll be fairly warm till well inter the night, out here on the rocks; thet is, warm 'nough for Doctor Jarsper an' me. Ther young leddies, an' you, Marm Bessly, had best fix on thet cave down below."

"Did you ever know any real facts about that cave, Uncle Billy?" Margaret asked, with just a suspicion of anxiety in her voice.

"Wa'l," he said, after a moment's deliberation, "when I was a small lad, I used ter hear things 'bout it, an' 'bout Danger-Head, as I 've told ye. But they was all yarns from others, ye see; an' so I could n't mek affidavy ter seein' or hearin' anythin' myself."

"What was it you heard?" she urged. "Tell us some of the stories."

"There wa' n't much, after all, Miss Marg'ret, come ter sift 'em down," he replied carelessly, as if he thought she needed reassuring. "Ye see any old woman in town, or any sailor, could tell ye how

there used ter come queer whistles an' sounds over ther water from here'bouts."

Margaret seemed disappointed, and rather impatient, at this tame result of her questioning.

"I 've heard all that before," she said. "But can't you give us some better idea of what the sounds were like?"

"Oh, nothin' much; only sort o' wild cries," the old man replied uneasily, and evidently wishing to leave the subject.

"Pooh!" exclaimed Margaret. "Is that all? The 'wild cries,' as you call them, probably came from sea gulls."

This appeared to nettle him, for he said, with more earnestness than he had yet shown, "Now, Miss Marg'ret, ye know well 'nough thet sea gulls' cries don't carry so far. An' ther town-folks know ther noise made by gulls, an' surely would n't tek so much 'count o' their squawkin' as ter hand down for over a hundred years ther fact o' hevin' heerd 'em."

"Well, Uncle Billy, I 've heard all my life about the awful things of Danger-Head; but beyond the story of strange cries having been heard over the water, I have never been able to learn anything positive. And now that I 've been here on the rock, I don't believe a single word of these silly tales. And what 's more, I don't believe any sensible person ever did."

Uncle Billy had been smoking placidly; and when she finished, he took the pipe from his mouth, as if about to reply. But his eyes only rested for a

moment upon her wilful face, and then he began smoking again.

"As to the noises," said Doctor Jasper, "I should think the racket made by the winds and waves was sufficient of itself to give color to the stories."

"For them as loves ther sea, an' studies it, there 's 'bout most anythin' ye may choose ter find in ther shape o' queer sounds."

The old man had just knocked the ashes from his pipe, and used it to emphasize his words, speaking not only with the air of one who knew all about the subject, but as if wishing to have it dropped.

And so it was, for the discussion came to an end. But Mrs. Bessly, who had been silent for a surprisingly long time, now said in a dolorous tone, "An' here we be, talkin' as if we was hevin' 'nother picnic, an' was sure 'bout gittin' home all right, jest as we was on Skuttle-Hump. An' now jest s'pose the winds come on to blow, so we can't git off'n here for days an' days! What should we ever do, Uncle Billy, s'posin' it does?"

She sat too far away from him to see the twinkle in his eyes as he replied, "Wa'l, Marm, ther sailors hev this sayin' 'mong theirselves: 'S'posin' yer aunt hed whiskers — what a rum uncle she 'd mek!' An' so, Marm Bessly, by yer leave, we won't do no s'posin' whatsomever. An'," now speaking seriously, and looking at Loleta, who seemed listening to the talk, but not inclined to join in it, "don't any o' ye be worryin', — not a bit. I tek it thet ther wind can't change much till mornin'. Sam 'll bring back Uncle Darb's big dory, thet 's copper-bottomed,

an' strong as a rock. An' so we'll git off'n here all right when ther tide's runnin' out, even if it should happen ter blow a bit. I was a fool, anyhow, ter let ye risk comin' over here in thet cockle-shell o' mine, Miss Marg'ret." And he glanced ruefully toward the dory lying just below them.

"Never mind, Uncle Billy," she said cheerfully. "If any one is to be blamed, you can put the most of it upon me, for I was the one who first insisted upon coming. Then you can put some on Doctor Jasper, and a very little bit on Loleta."

"An' is thet what ye think I 'd do, Miss Marg'ret, when I stands afore Cap'n Leslie, — try an' hide 'hind wimmen's petticoats?"

The old man's voice was decidedly indignant, and so was the unusually severe look he gave Margaret. But all this disappeared as she said, "Of course you would n't, Uncle Billy. But then you know I *did* insist upon coming; and so I shall tell papa the truth, if you don't. Neither you nor Mrs. Bessly wanted me to come."

"Thet I did n't!" came the latter's emphatic affirmation. "I was ag'in it from the very first."

CHAPTER XV

GREAT had been the glory of the sunset, lighting the sea and sky so long that the twilight stole down unnoticed, and was all the more brief.

Darkness and night followed swiftly. The sea, far out, turned to an ashen floor, as the stars came forth. And the turmoil of the near-by waters raged and roared, as they dashed about the rocky bulwarks of Danger-Head.

Mrs. Bessly and the girls were still sitting on the ledge above the useless dory; but Uncle Billy and Doctor Jasper had gone off together, somewhere, about the rocks, out of sight and hearing.

Presently Margaret turned to Loleta and asked, "Aren't you beginning to feel hungry?"

"Yes, I am, Margot," came the low reply; "I am very hungry."

"I feel awful peckish myself," agreed Mrs. Bessly. "I wish we'd brought the basket from the boat, for there was consider'ble left over in it."

"We will, next time," said Margaret, a smile sounding in her voice.

Mrs. Bessly groaned, but, for a wonder, held her peace.

"I could never care to come upon this rock again," declared Loleta, pressing her hands over

her ears, while she rested her elbows in her lap. "It does make one's head tired — the noise. It is so distracting, when it keeps on, and on, and the wind blows, and blows."

"I think it is perfectly glorious!" exclaimed Margaret, holding high her head, while her short curls blew about in the breeze; and Loleta could see how large her eyes had become. "It always makes me feel like a warrior to be where I can see and hear the sea in a big blow. It makes me feel like doing some great deed, that shall go ringing down through the ages, and lift my memory up to where men and women would look upon me in some such way as they do upon Joan of Arc. It is well worth giving up what we call 'life,' to have it go out as hers did, when one is young. And life would be little worth keeping if one had to go crawling along through years and years, like a mole."

The girl seemed filled with a strange enthusiasm, and Loleta looked at her wonderingly. But Mrs. Bessly only ejaculated, "Land-sakes, Marg'ret, how you do go on!" And rising from her seat, she moved a short way off, and became absorbed in looking at the distant little town, where faint lights now began to shine.

Loleta had not removed her eyes from Margaret's face. And now she took her hands from her ears and crossed them in her lap, as she said softly, — her own face filled with an earnestness the fast-growing twilight could not hide, — "Do you not think, Margot, that it is far more difficult for the one to be brave who does have to crawl along

through years and years, than for the one whose life may go out suddenly in such a blaze of glory, as you have said, — the one whom all her world might praise, and say of her, 'It is well; and she was good and noble!' Do you not think this?"

"Loleta, you are crying!" Margaret exclaimed in amazement, as she bent her face closer to the other. And touching her cheek, she found it to be wet.

Loleta shrank back in silence. Then she glanced nervously toward Mrs. Bessly, who was moving off over the rocks, and was soon some distance away, with her draperies fluttering in the wind.

"What is it, dear?" Margaret asked in a whisper, coming still closer to Loleta, and drawing her hand between her own warm palms. "You surely don't feel troubled about Jacques?"

"Oh, no. I suppose of course he will get home safely, as he has so many times before, when he has been sailing with Sam."

"Of course he will. Are you frightened for fear we 'll not get home safely ourselves? You must n't worry about that, for everything will be all right."

"No, no, Margot; it is not that. For myself," she added, with a sudden passionate impulse, "I do wish I never need to go home. I do wish I could end it all right here, — now — this very moment." And she flung her head down on Margaret's shoulder.

The calm-natured New England girl was not so startled as she might have been; for once or twice before she had seen something like this reckless outbreak upon Loleta's part, and had set it down as due to her tropical heritage.

But now there seemed to be a deeper passion controlling her; for she placed her lips close to Margaret's ear, and said in a low tone, full of despair, "Margot, you do not know; you never will — never can, know!"

"Know what?" Margaret asked, now really concerned, for she had never seen her friend in quite such a mood as this.

"How tired I am of living; of going on, and on, with nothing bright to which I can look forward, — with only the curse that does seem to be cast over my life."

She was now sitting up, and once more framed her face in her hands.

"Nonsense, nonsense," said Margaret cheerily, determined to do what she could to prevent any farther outbreak, by treating the matter lightly. "You must n't talk in that way, dear, or I 'll have to tell you about Simon Soggs."

"Simon Soggs!" repeated Loleta, now in a tone of surprise. "And who might this Simon — Soggs be?"

She spoke as if making an effort to find something which might change the current of her thoughts.

Margaret laughed, happy to have succeeded so well.

"No one I ever knew, dear; only I happened to read about him the other day. I can't recall all of it now, but remember enough of what Simon was told, and what he said, to use him as the medicine you seem to be needing just now; although I must

say that I cannot imagine why you should feel as you do."

Loleta did not answer; and Margaret, without farther preliminary, began: —

> "'Let us give thanks,' the Deacon said,
> And then the proclamation read.
> 'Give thanks for what, and what about?'
> Asked Simon Soggs, when church was out.
> 'Give thanks for what? I don't see why.
> The rust 's got in and spoiled my rye.'"

"And then," said Margaret, still more encouraged by the changed expression she saw upon Loleta's face, "Simon goes on to give a long list of woes that have befallen him and his. And it ends in this way: —

> "The Deacon answered, sad and low,
> 'Simon, it fills me with surprise
> Ye don't see where your duty lies.
> Kneel right straight down, in all the muss,
> An' thank the Lord it ain't no wuss.'"

Loleta sighed; but Margaret could see a faint smile touch her lips, as she said, "You are a sweet, good friend, Margot mine, and I am glad that you may never know trouble, as I do. But it was foolish of me that I did talk so; and you will forget it."

Her questioning tone was full of wistfulness, and Margaret could only reply by a quick hand-clasp; for Mrs. Bessly suddenly reappeared close to them and inquired, "What under the canopy can them two men be doin' now?" She pointed toward Uncle Billy and Doctor Jasper, who could be seen moving

over the rocks, to the right, on the side facing the town and harbor.

"They are piling up stuff for a fire," answered keen-eyed Margaret, glancing in the direction indicated; "and I — "

But Mrs. Bessly interrupted her by exclaiming, "Land-sakes, girls, I 've jest found some crackers in my pocket!"

"Oh, Mrs. Bessly!" they cried, as with one voice; and Loleta's unhappiness appeared to have been put aside.

"Yes; seven crackers. An' as luck would hev it, they 're big ones, too. I remember now thet I put 'em in my pocket this arternoon, thinkin' Cap'n Jack might want 'em. Now we 'll divide 'em fair, an' leave a share for the Doctor an' Uncle Billy."

Margaret took a bite of her cracker, and uttered a little sigh of satisfaction.

"If," she said reflectively, "we are so glad to get something to eat, when we had such a hearty meal only a little while ago, how must it be with poor shipwrecked sailors, who starve for days and days at sea, tossing about in an open boat, and under the burning sun?"

"Uncle Billy went through thet onc't," remarked Mrs. Bessly, as she slowly mumbled her dry provender; "when he was a young man, an' was shipwrecked somewheres 'round the Cape o' Good Hope. But I 'd 'vise ye not to speak 'bout it to him; for they say thet some o' the party et up one o' their-selves."

Both girls exclaimed with horror, and Mrs. Bessly

added with gruesome emphasis, "I 'll mention no names; but thet 's the story o' the crew thet Uncle Billy an' two other men was the only survivin' members of. An' he 's never seemed inclined to speak o' the p'tic'lars o' thet castin'-away."

"But, Bess," said Margaret expostulatingly, "do you really believe that Uncle Billy — "

Mrs. Bessly checked farther inquiry by waving the hand that held a half-eaten cracker.

"Never mind what I b'lieve, Marg'ret, or what I don't. I jest tell the story as I 've heerd it, an' leave you to do yer own b'lievin'."

"It 's perfectly horrible," Margaret went on; "and I 'll not believe that he could ever do such a thing." But Doctor Jasper now joined them, and no more was said.

He looked closely at the cracker which Mrs. Bessly, with a characteristic flow of words, held out to him.

"Cracker, is it? No, thank you. I 'm not quite starved yet; and if worse comes to worse, Uncle Billy and I can try to rig up a hook and line, and catch some fish off the rocks. He has just been telling me how deliciously he can cook a fish by wrapping him in a seaweed overcoat."

"I can do thet very same thing myself," declared Mrs. Bessly, with a sniff.

And she was about to enlarge upon the theme when Margaret said, "Doctor, I see that you are going to make a signal fire."

"Yes; and there 's enough wreckage lying about these rocks to make a dozen of them. Uncle Billy

says we will keep watch, — he and I. And we'll light the fire at about two o'clock in the morning, and have it well going, as that is about the time we may expect to hear a hail from Sam."

"And what of us?" Loleta inquired a little nervously. "What are we to do all night?"

"I agree with Uncle Billy in advising you ladies to go down into that cavern, where it will be perfectly dry and warm, and where you will be fairly comfortable. We have been making a fire there; and it is blazing away in a fashion to make the place almost inviting."

"Sartain; thet 's ther sensiblest thing for ther leddies," chimed in Uncle Billy, who had just come up; "for, Miss Marg'ret, ye 'd ketch yer death, roostin' out on these here rocks in ther night-damp."

"Very well," replied Margaret resignedly.

And Loleta murmured, as if thinking aloud, "If that it could only be more quiet down in there."

Uncle Billy did not dwell upon the matter; but, lighting a piece of dry wreckage, to show the way, he led them back and down into the cave.

If it had been impressive before, with the sunshine lying bright and warm over the rocks and sea outside, it was far more than that now, with the night about them, and the increased volume of sound from the higher tide without.

Even stout-hearted Margaret slipped her fingers through Mrs. Bessly's arm, and she could feel Loleta clutching like a timid child at her gown.

Uncle Billy stuck his improvised torch into a

cleft of the rocks, and then he and Doctor Jasper piled more wreckage upon the already cheering fire.

"I 've med it here in ther corner," the old man explained, "where ther smoke 'll mostly go over inter t'other cavern, an' out'n some o' ther chinks aloft. Ye see it won't seem lonesome-lek, when ye hev light, an' a warmin' fire."

"An' if any of us should die in the night," Mrs. Bessly added dolefully, "it 'll be more comfortin' to be able to see friends 'round us."

Uncle Billy, who was still fixing the fire, turned to her with a most disapproving look, as he replied gravely, "When a man comes ter die, Marm Bessly, it 's my notion he 's all alone 'board his craft, even if it 's manned by as big a crew o' relations an' sorrowin' friends as 't would tek ter handle a man-o'-war. No matter how many 's about, he 's alone — all alone. An' it 's likewise my b'lief, Marm, thet right then 's where angels gits in their work. They comes aboard an' teks ther wheel; an' they keeps us company till our souls leave ther old hulk. Then they steers us inter ther new port. An' thet 's why so many goes with smiles on their faces."

He had gradually drawn himself up to his not very great height, and his rugged, weather-beaten face seemed touched by a transfiguring light as he expressed in these homely words his theory of man's passing away.

Doctor Jasper and the two girls looked at him, their faces showing an increasing respect for the good-hearted, simple-minded old sailor. And when

he finished, even Mrs. Bessly's busy tongue was at a loss for anything to say in reply.

Hundreds of echoes gathered in the more distant parts of the rocky chamber; and these scarce had time to sigh away their voices before another riotous billow recalled them in yet louder tones of moaning, until the noise became still more sonorous and enlarged, like booming thunder.

"Listenin' only seems to mek it sound worser," Mrs. Bessly remarked, with a spasmodic attempt at briskness, although her voice was attuned to the minor key. "It 's certainly awful; an' I 'll never, never, if I live to Methuselah's years, forgit this night."

Then another silence fell over them, to be broken again by Mrs. Bessly, to whom keeping quiet was a seeming impossibility. This time she did not content herself with impersonal remarks, but addressed her words to Uncle Billy.

"D'ye know I 've jest been thinkin', Uncle Billy, what a fine thing 't would hev been if old Miss Bliss hed knowed o' this place years ago, when she was town-talk for bein' so sot on hevin' Emma-Jane marry thet rich old Hawksey, from over seas."

If the old man heard her, he gave no indication of it, and kept his eyes fixed upon the fire. But Doctor Jasper, as if for the lack of something better to do, asked, "Why so, Mrs. Bessly?"

"Why, she was so fierce, keepin' Emma-Jane locked up, tryin' to mek her change her mind, an' see the sense o' not throwin' herself away on a poor man, when a rich one was tryin' to get her to marry

him. An' I guess Miss Bliss might hunt the world over, an' never hev found a better place to shet her girl away by herself than right here."

"Who was she, Bess?" Margaret inquired, with some slight show of interest.

"Why, Marg'ret!" And Mrs. Bessly's tone was tinged with surprise. "She was Emma-Jane Bliss, — she thet married homely Jonas Cally, an' stayed in this town to this day, tied to her husband's shoemaker's shop. Thet is, she did, till they both died, last year. An' to think she might hev been drivin' 'round London-town with her own carriage, an' in silks an' diamonds."

"I thought her name was Imogene," said Margaret, with a half-concealed yawn, and not appearing greatly interested in the love story of Emma-Jane. "I 'm sure that is the name on her gravestone."

"Well, like 'nough; an' 'cordin' to her ma's tell, it was. Miss Bliss was a fanciful soul, an' named her children out'n books she 'd read. But the folks as hed sense always spelt it Emma-Jane; an' Emma-Jane she was, for most of 'em. Now there was the twins. You may read on their gravestones (thet is, if they ain't covered with *lickets*) thet they was Enos-Gomoliah an' Vennie-Rosalie. Them was names to kill 'most any soul in their early youth, which the inscriptions tell ye was the time they went. An' thet minds me o' somethin' thet hed n't ought to be let stay; an' thet 's the *lickets*" (of course she meant lichens) "on lots o' the old stones. Why, t' other Sunday arternoon me an' Mary-Alice was up in the buryin'-ground, an' she was readin' the verses on old

Cap'n Spencer's first wife's gravestone. The last line was somethin' 'bout, 'Dry up your tears, an' prepare to follow me.' An' ye hed to look close to see any more letterin' after 'Dry up,' for the lickets was all over the rest. Mary-Alice hed to scrape a lot of 'em off before we could mek out what it said."

The girls had by this time spread some wraps on the sandy floor, partly up against the rocky wall, and were half-lying, half-sitting upon them, close together, Loleta's head being near Margaret's shoulder, and her eyes still downcast, as she leaned upon one elbow, with her cheek against her palm.

Although Margaret joined Doctor Jasper in laughing at Mrs. Bessly's rambling story, Loleta only smiled, and then came again that same pitiful drooping about the corners of her mouth.

This did not escape the Doctor's keen eyes, and he turned away, wondering what sort of an old dragon her grandmother must be, that she should make the girl's life so miserable.

"I 've no doubt," he said to himself, "that the poor child is this very moment dreading the scolding she knows is awaiting her at home."

The firelight sent strange flickerings around the cave, stirring up the dense shadows, making them wave and dance; and from without, an ever-increasing sound rolled in from the sea.

Presently Uncle Billy arose and went outside, returning in a few minutes to say, "Ther moon 's gittin' up, an' ther wind 's still a quiet breezin' from ther west-sou'west. Tekin' things altogether, it 's a mighty fine night."

"Cannot we go outside to take a look?" Margaret asked. "And then we 'll try to get some sleep, won't we, Loleta? I, for one, am getting the 'sand-man' into my eyes."

Mrs. Bessly declined to go out; and so the two girls went with Doctor Jasper, finding their way easily along the rocky path to the first plateau outside, where they stood and looked off over the sea.

The moon, now riding high, shed a soft light that sent gleams over the restless water, showing here and there the white crest of a wave rising higher than those about it, and then falling away into the darkness. There was ever the dull roar of pent-up waves, sending an awesome roll trembling in all the air about Danger-Head; and the fresh wind, damp with night, blew into the watchers' faces the spray-cold breath of the sea.

Doctor Jasper's eyes turned to Loleta's face; and there was sufficient light for him to see a shade of sadness upon it.

"Are you frightened?" he asked, softly, stepping closer to her.

She raised her eyes to his, but only for an instant. Then, turning them away again, she answered rather shortly, "No."

A moment afterwards, she looked at him again, as though conscious that he was still regarding her. But Margaret spoke, and Loleta turned away once more, slipping her hand through the other girl's arm.

"Of course there 's nothing to fear," Margaret was

saying. "It will be dead low tide again by four o'clock in the morning, and Uncle Billy says we shall get off all right. Come, Loleta, let 's go back to our den, and see if we can't go to Nodland in spite of all the noise."

The two girls sat far into the night, half-awake, leaning against each other, and partly against the wall at their backs, while the sound of the waves came unceasingly to their ears.

Now it was the rumble made by the countless feet of a great host, marching — ever marching. Then the surging changed to music, — the martial music of this mighty army whose tread still sounded in their ears. It was like the call of thousands upon thousands of silver-voiced trumpets, and the roll of innumerable drums.

At last, amid all this tumult of sound, Loleta fell into a dreaming sleep.

She was lying upon a great disk of purest silver, and could see the curling ends of her unbound hair, blown by the rushing winds that tossed them about the edges of her glistening support.

She dared not raise her head, as she lay prone, with out-flung arms, for she was conscious of being lifted to immeasurable heights amid the stars of Heaven, — of flashing white wings all about, — of angel powers, bearing her swiftly upward.

On and up she was borne, until such a flood of dazzling light fell upon her face that she cried out, and covered her eyes. Then a sweet voice said, — she could see no one — "You are at the Gate of Heaven, but may not enter; for you are as the

clouds driven by the wind, as wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever!"

"Ah! That is me, surely!" she cried out with a sobbing voice, and stretching forth her arms, awoke to see Margaret staring at her in alarm. But under Loleta's startled gaze, this turned to laughter.

"Well, Loleta, I hope it surely 'is me'! What on earth were you dreaming about?"

"Something so very strange, Margot; and yet it was beautiful. Did I wake you?"

"No, indeed," with a little yawn. "I have not really been asleep; but I thought you were, until just now, when you caught my arm, and cried out, 'That is me, surely!' But," with another yawn, "I am *so* sleepy, Loleta, and yet I cannot get asleep, — tired, and yet I don't want to keep still. Now just look at Bess, over there, slumbering like all the Seven Sleepers boiled down into one. I wonder if it 's because she has such a clear conscience?"

"Oh, Margot," Loleta sighed wearily, and not heeding the playful words, "must it not surely be time for them to come for us?"

Margaret went over to the fire, and held her watch so that its dial might catch the now faint light.

"It 's almost three. So it is time to awaken Bess, and then go outside. This fire won't last much longer; and a while ago I put the last scrap of stuff upon it." She nodded toward the huge pile of ashes, in the midst of which one feeble spear of flame was waving from some charred bits of wood.

To arouse Mrs. Bessly was no easy task. She

slept soundly; but her mind and tongue seemed to be in full activity, for she rattled forth voluble orders to Jane whenever the girls tried to awaken her.

And so they sat and waited for her to open her eyes, and satisfy herself that Jane was not present. But her voice would die away in murmurs, which soon resolved themselves into a gentle snore.

Uncle Billy had given Doctor Jasper the "first watch," as he called it, wishing to be on deck himself later, when Sam should return. And so it was one o'clock when the Doctor left the old man crouched on the rocks by the ready-to-light fire, and threw himself down upon the warm, soft sand, just inside the passage leading to the cavern.

He did not go to sleep for some time, but lay there in the dark, listening to the waves, and beginning to weave new schemes from the new dreams.

Little as he knew of Loleta, — few times as he had seen her, love had already come to him; such a love, so persistent and absorbing, as comes only to men of his nature, his education and experience, his knowledge of the world, and understanding of its people.

This love was the new object of his life, diverting him from all else, and taking his entire being to itself.

Did she love him? No; not yet. But this mattered little now. He was thinking of his own love for her, — how true it was, and how strong. It was — as he told himself — perfectly unselfish; and when it should become known to her, she would surely let

him clear the shadows from her young life, and make her happy by his love and devotion.

But what were these shadows? What was it that led Captain Leslie and Margaret to speak as they did of her and her life, — a life that, so far as the world could see, was surrounded by all that wealth and luxury could offer to make it happy and complete?

What was it that so often brought such a look of sadness — almost despair — to her girlish face, and such a strange light into her wonderful eyes? What was the mystery lying back of all this, and was it one that would ever be unveiled to him?

"Loleta!" What an odd name, — and how well it suited her?

How beautiful she was — how dainty, and sweet, — how different from all the world about her! He thought of her as she was now, with her loveliness and femininity, seeking refuge in the rough cave so near to him; and his heart thrilled as he realized that she was, in a way, under his own protection.

Then after a while his thoughts began to grow hazy, and the surging of the waves became less and less distinct, until at last it came to his swooning senses as if the waters, too, were dreaming of love and peace.

And so, laying a seal upon his eyelids, they lulled him to slumber.

CHAPTER XVI

WHAT was it that awakened him, or only seemed to awaken him, so alert were all his senses as he sprang to his feet and listened? A faint cry came, — dying even as it came. Then he heard a loud shout from Uncle Billy, and saw a line of red light flickering above the rocks, showing that the signal fire was lit.

He hastened to summon the girls and Mrs. Bessly; and in a few minutes they were all gathered about Uncle Billy, straining their eyes to make out a sail moving phantom-like near the place where the "Pretty Sally" had been anchored the afternoon before.

The night was not quite gone. There was a faint darkness; and the moon, almost set, was making a red streak among some ragged clouds that came down like the steps of a throne to the sea, where now and then the surge would rear an unbroken mass. Over them was a great lake of unfathomable blue, in which the stars appeared to be floating; and they seemed near enough to be "teched with a pole," as Mrs. Bessly remarked to the Doctor.

It was Uncle Darb's big dory that came to the rocks, with that worthy himself pulling one oar, and old Sam Ayres the other. They had little to say, but both of them gave strict attention to handling

the boat, while Uncle Billy made the arrangements for embarking his passengers.

And indeed it required all their skill and strength to do this, lest the dory should be dashed too roughly against the ledges that made a barrier to keep away the seething, foaming mass of waters which, farther along, where the rocks rose higher and more sheer, rolled, with angry mutterings, in and upwards.

Uncle Billy was the last to step into the dory; and a grunt of relief mingled with his order to "pull away."

"We 're well out'n thet," he growled, as they left the rock; and the two veteran oarsmen answered with a hearty "Aye, aye."

Then old Sam asked, "What possessed ye, anyhow, Bill, to go on sech a galliwantin'?"

"I coaxed him to go," Margaret answered promptly; "for I have wanted all my life to get on Danger-Head and walk about."

Old Sam gaped at her, and said nothing more. But Uncle Darb chuckled so openly that she demanded to know what he was laughing at.

"It 's allus the same with you — child or young woman," he said, still grinning.

"Why, — what do you mean?" she asked, looking sharply into his good-natured face.

"I 've often thought 't was a pity you was a gal; for — I snum! you 're darin' as any boy. D' ye mind the time down in the Cove, when you was a little gal in pinnies, playin' with hump-backed Trask Evans an' that big Averill boy that was sech a bully, — the one that fell off'n the mast an' was drownded,

two years back, out somewheres in the south seas? He come down an' begun callin' Trask names, an' makin' fun o' his hump. An' he threw some dirt on your pinny, thinkin' to make you cry, as you was stickin' up for Trask. An' by the great horned Hokey! if you did n't whip off your tier, an' wrap his head in it, an' git him down before he could say 'Jack Robinson'! An' then you well nigh thumped the life out'n him. Ho — ho!"

Uncle Billy, and even old Ayres, joined in the laugh; and Margaret, glancing a little uneasily toward Doctor Jasper, made haste to say, "Never mind, Uncle Darb, you 'll see that before many years I 'll be settled down into as prim an old maid as ever the town saw."

"Surely, Miss Marg'ret, you don't think o' keepin' the Cap'n's house for him all that time!" And Uncle Darb grinned again, as he looked askance at the Doctor, who sat behind him.

But the girl's face was calm and colorless, and she vouchsafed no reply.

The craft awaiting them was Uncle Darb's old schooner, the "Daniel Webster," brought because of its having a cabin to protect the ladies from the dampness and cold.

Captain Leslie's hearty voice was the first to greet them as the dory came alongside. And Margaret had no sooner gained the deck than he clasped her in his arms and asked with a good deal of anxiety, "All right, Peggy, my dear?"

"Perfectly so, Papa," was the reassuring answer; "and I have had quite enough of being 'Rocked in

the cradle of the deep.' I never seemed to understand those words as I do now, for the noise over there on Danger-Head is something beyond anything I ever heard, or could imagine."

"I should think so, you madcap." And he kissed her. Then, in his usual jolly tone, "Why, helloa, Mrs. Bessly! Here you are, too; and how are you after your night's dissipation?"

"All right, Captain; all right, like Jane Hadden's plates, — jest as good as new, only a little cracked. An' the noise o' the ragin' seas over them rocks is 'nough to crack any poor mortal's ears, to say nothin' o' plates."

"And you, my lass, are you all right, like the rest of the marooners?" This was to Loleta, as she came slowly toward him.

"Oh, yes," she said wearily, but trying to smile. "Only I am very sleepy."

"No doubt of it. But you 'll have all day to make up for what you lost last night."

He now turned to Doctor Jasper, who had been keeping himself somewhat in the background.

"You are a fine fellow, aren't you?" And he slapped him on the shoulder. "I gave you credit for more dignity, — a man of your profession, to say nothing of your years. And here I find you going high-jinksing along with my Peg, just like all the rest of us."

"I have nothing to say, Captain," was the meek reply, "only to admit the offence, and ask what my sentence is to be."

"The same for you, as the others, — that every one

of you follow me to the cabin, and get something to eat and drink. Come, Loleta, my dear, — come with me. Heave-ho, Peg, — bring along the Doctor and Mrs. Bessly. And you too, Uncle Billy; fall in, my lad, and pipe all hands below."

The liquid light of dawn was trembling over the sea when they reached the old wharf and climbed the steps; and far down in the east the sky was shot across as by a hand alight, where, like gates of brass, the day was opening for the coming sun.

The Captain brought the party to a standstill at the top of the steps, while he consulted his watch.

"Now, Loleta," he said, "I think I'll let my Peg help me to take you home, as she can make peace with your grandmother, in case it's called for. And then, besides, I don't suppose Madame will care particularly to see me at this hour of the day."

"Ye don't want me to go, do ye, Captain?"

There was a subdued plaintiveness in Mrs. Bessly's voice, and she cast a longing glance at her house across the deserted street, where all the blinds were closed, and nothing seemed alive.

"No, no, indeed, Mrs. Bessly," Loleta answered quickly; "you must surely be very tired."

And Margaret added, "Yes, Bess, you must be tired enough of us and our pranks. So go home, and sleep it all off; and I'll try to be good, and not get you into any more such scrapes."

Mrs. Bessly looked at the girl with loving, but heavy eyes, and after bidding them all good-by, started across the street. But before going many

steps she turned and asked, "Be ye comin' home now, Doctor Jasper?"

He hesitated, and they all looked at him as Mrs. Bessly went on to say, "'Cause if ye be n't, I 'll leave the back door unlocked."

The Doctor glanced at Loleta, and then said that he would go along with Captain Leslie.

The old town was not yet awake, and they met no one. But as they reached the door of the Harwood house, it was flung wide open before the Captain's extended hand could press the electric button, and a gigantic negress, with brightly turbaned head and huge gold rings swinging from her ears, exclaimed joyously, "Mom — Momsel Loleta!"

With this she caught the girl in her arms, while she went on speaking excitedly, pouring forth a most curious patois, partially English, partially African and French, the whole winding up with, "La, la, — we 's 'feared a boat 'd sunk wid ye!"

Loleta took all this impassively, although with kindly eyes, as she gently pushed the woman to one side and asked the others to enter the house.

As soon as they were inside, Mammy Zabette, — for she it was, — after a quaint courtesy to Captain Leslie and Margaret, and a sharp glance at Doctor Jasper, announced, "M'me is in lillie boudoir, waitin'. *Pauvre, pauvre,* — an' her stan' an' walk de flo' all 'de night!"

The Captain went with Loleta along the handsome hall; and Doctor Jasper, as he followed with Margaret, was almost wishing that he had gone to bed like a

sensible man, such was the really quaking feeling that now possessed him at the thought of standing in the presence of this terrible grandmother of the woman he loved.

Then he heard the Captain's hearty voice, saying, "Here she is, Madame, all safe and sound; and, like the sea bird's feathers, she 'll stand any amount of storm and wetting without the prettiness being lost."

"Always gallant, my dear Captain Nat," answered another voice, the contralto of Loleta's soprano. The next minute Doctor Jasper raised his eyes in acknowledgment of the Captain's introduction, and saw Madame Harwood.

A single glance was sufficient to satisfy him how entirely at fault was the mental picture he had formed of her; for he found himself looking at a remarkably beautiful woman, who bore her five and fifty years lightly, and with superb queenliness.

Slightly above the medium height of her sex, her figure was that of a girl, and her face perfectly rounded, with the skin soft and smooth as thirty years before.

It was startlingly white, by contrast with the large black eyes, the long lashes and strongly marked brows, and masses of jetty hair, carefully dressed in a becoming, but oddly individual fashion.

Her eyes were wonderful in their varying expressions, — one instant luminous and soft, and the next showing a fire that suggested a will which brooked no opposition.

Doctor Jasper set her down at once as a woman

of marvellous magnetism and force, proud and self-reliant; one born, not to serve, but to be obeyed, — not to cajole, but to command; a woman capable of the most intense affection and the bitterest resentment.

The hand she extended in smiling greeting was small and soft. But as he felt the firm clasp of the supple fingers he knew it was a hand that could punish, as well as reward; one that, full as it might be of good works, would never swerve from the fulfilment of duty, nor falter in executing justice.

Her entire appearance was so different from anything he had anticipated, that, rather taken aback, he actually stammered while apologizing for his appearance at such an early hour.

But Captain Leslie covered his embarrassment by saying, "Avast there, my lad! Madame 's too used to sailor and shipboard ways to stand on ceremony with those who come to bring her grandchild back to her."

As for Madame Harwood herself, she added graciously, "Make no excuses, I beg, Doctor Jasper. You see me now because I have been so anxious, and my anxiety would not permit me to rest."

She turned from him to Loleta. "Are you quite sure that you are all right, my *bébé*, and none the worse for your adventure?"

Her voice sank to a low sweetness, as she put one arm around the girl, while her great black eyes seemed to be devouring the lovely face.

"Indeed yes, Grandmère." And Loleta smiled, as

she turned quickly to drop a kiss upon the fingers caressing her cheek. "I know you will say it was foolish for us to go on Danger-Head. But we all did very much wish to explore there; and Uncle Billy did think we could safely do as we wished, although he and Mrs. Bessly did not really want us to go."

"It would have been all right, Madame Harwood, if the rocks had not made a hole in Uncle Billy's dory," Margaret hastened to say; while Doctor Jasper, still wondering within himself, looked furtively at this strangely beautiful woman, so majestic and imperious of mien, and yet with such a fascination in her subtle caressing of manner and voice, — something alluring, but all the more puzzling by contrast with her queenly hauteur and fiery eyes.

"A wonderful woman," was what he remembered Captain Leslie had called her. And surely she was all of this.

"Now, lass, come home, and be tucked in your own bunk."

The Captain's voice recalled Doctor Jasper to himself. And then, after a few more words, they took their leave.

Margaret yawned unreservedly during the walk home, and stumbled in a way to cause her father to remark that she was conducting herself like Billy Arms, the "town drunkard."

"I can't help it, Papa," she said, as she tripped again. "I am simply dying for sleep. I shall go to bed the very moment I get home, and stay there until to-morrow morning. But, all the same, I 'm

glad to be able to say all the rest of my life that I 've been on Danger-Head."

" That 's right, Pegaway: stick to your colors, even if you 're sinking." And the Captain laughed, as he patted her cheek.

CHAPTER XVII

ALTHOUGH it was Saturday, there was washing to be done at Mrs. Bessly's; and Irish Nora — an outside help in time of need — was on hand to do it.

She was leaning over the tub, hard at work, when Mrs. Bessly said solemnly, apropos of the washerwoman's lament over the recent death of an acquaintance, "The dead, Nora, are better off'n we be."

"No doubt, no doubt," Nora agreed, as she scrubbed away. "But I'm layin' me bets, Miss Bessly, that's alive ye'd sooner be, like ye are this minute, than tucked away under a grass quilt in the buryin' ground."

There was no reply to this; and Nora went on, as she reached for the soap, "I often think that the big washin's I have to do here won't be half so tirin' as to be settin' 'round on clouds av glory, pickin' at harps. An' it's often I do be wonderin' how it is I'm ever goin' to play the harps at all at all, unless it's that they do be havin' music t'achers in Hivin'; for the divil a note can I play, except on the sort o' pianny I'm playin' on now." And she put renewed vigor into her performance upon the wash-board.

"What on earth 's got into ye, to talk in sech a way as thet?" demanded Mrs. Bessly, with marked disapproval.

" Oh, will, will," was the good-natured but irresponsive answer, " 'p'r'aps 't will be the natur av us to play an' sing, whin we 're angels, jist like the birds on the trees, wid their tra-la-la, tra-la-loo."

Mrs. Bessly apparently aroused herself for argument, for she sniffed once or twice, and asked rather scornfully, " An' d' ye s'pose, Nora, thet when we 're angels we roost 'round on trees an' things, jest like birds, doin' nothin' but sing all the time? If ye do — "

But Jane called her aunt for something or other, and the discussion ended.

Down in the Leslie orchard Margaret was swinging in a hammock, the shadows from the trees chasing one another over her like wafting smoke, while she was thinking about the unusual circumstance of Madame Harwood having invited them — Doctor Jasper, her father, and herself — to take tea with her that evening.

Doctor Jasper's thoughts were also busy with this same invitation as he sat by a window in his room at Mrs. Bessly's, reviewing — as he had done more than once since his unseasonable advent at the Harwood house some hours before — the odd individuality and strange beauty of Loleta and her grandmother.

Looking out over the sea, and with his hands clasped behind his head, he had been thinking deeply, besides smoking a good many more cigars than he would have recommended another man to consume.

During this time he had seen Captain Jack go by with Uncle Billy; and the child had called out that he was going to the old man's " bungalow."

The road leading to this grew narrower after passing Mrs. Bessly's gate. Then, when it had run a little farther inland, it turned, and ended at an inlet called "Lobster Cove."

Along one side was a straggling line of quaint old houses, utterly devoid of paint, and with tiny, four-paned windows that had overlooked the sunrisings across the harbor for more than a hundred years. They had been warped by wind and weather until they seemed to lean wearily against each other, as though quite worn out through long battling with the elements.

In front of the last house the road began to slant upward, until it came to a plateau, through whose occasional greensward the rocks and boulders cropped out like worn patches upon a fine garment. And perched aloft on the highest point, which was partially levelled off, was the small, squat wooden structure known as Uncle Billy's "bungalow."

Unlike its neighbors lower down, it was bright with white paint and green trimmings, while curtains of turkey-red calico were hung before its small windows, whose well-cleaned panes glittered brilliantly in the sun.

The rock upon which it stood crowned the top of the hill, which fell away in gradual slopes upon three sides, while on the fourth, facing the sea, was a steep declivity, down which a path led to a small beach, where several dories were now lying; and amongst them, bottom side up, was the unfortunate boat that had come to grief against the rocks of Danger-Head.

Uncle Billy and Captain Jack having reached the bungalow, the former took from his pocket a huge key, with which, after considerable clatter, he unlocked the rather diminutive door. Then, throwing it open, he invited his small guest to enter.

"Never" — to use the old sailor's own words — "was there ther twinkle of a petticoat seen 'bout ther place." And yet no woman's hand could have arranged or kept the interior with more scrupulous neatness.

Of the two rooms downstairs, that in the rear was a kitchen and wash-room combined, from which a ladder gave access to a bunk aloft, while the front room served as a parlor and "living-room." It was small and square, with a low ceiling, bright, as were also the side-walls, with whitewash.

Between the windows was a home-made book-case and "what-not," of pine, whose former use was revealed when the visitor became seated; for then could be seen underneath, in large black letters, "Pride of England Soap." An immense Bible crowned the top shelf, while the lower ones were crowded with a most motley and unusual collection of articles, — a lot of shells, two spy-glasses, some corals and sponges, queer dried seaweeds, and dried star-fish. Then there was a pair of whale's teeth, one of them unadorned, but its mate showing a brilliant painting of an ogling young lady in a very pronounced Spanish costume.

A number of ships' pictures hung upon the walls, the most of them cheap prints; and with them were a few charts, these being well "pricked," — the

markings showing a vessel's course from port to port.

Uncle Billy had but few diversions; and one of them was to sit with a pipe, after his solitary supper, and make some of his own "v'yages" over again, or, when his imagination served, to prick out new and strange ones on the charts.

The open fire-place had a rudely made mantel-shelf over it, piled promiscuously with models of ships, and many rare shells, amid which a great fan of coral made a lace-like background for an immense mug of coarse yellow ware, depicted whereon, in indigo blue, was a tombstone, under a weeping willow, and surrounded by a group of seemingly sorrowful young people; while underneath, in large letters, was the legend, "My Mother's Grave." And at the end of the shelf was a handsome old ginger jar, out of whose mouth hung a variety of fish-hooks, attached to lines that disappeared within.

A large and very noisy clock hung by the door leading to the kitchen; and five frolicking cats were playing in the broad bands of sunshine streaming across the spotless wooden floor.

As Captain Jack entered the room he made a dive at the felines; but they scattered in a moment, and disappeared like magic. They were Uncle Billy's "family;" and, as he followed the child through the door, he addressed them like so many associates.

"Shipmets ahoy! Ahoy, ahoy, there, my lads. Come out an' welcome Cap'n Jack an' me 'board ship, why don't ye? Ye 're actin' purty, be n't ye,

hidin' as if ye was bashful? Come out, I say, for there 's work ter be done on ther beach, 'mong ther boats. That there dory 's got ter be stopped sound an' tight, ther fust thing."

Thus admonished, the " shipmets " came forth sneakingly from their various hiding-places.

Adam, a very large tortoise-shell, went and seated himself in the open doorway, as if to take a look at the work Uncle Billy had in contemplation. Moses and Aaron, two jetty, green-eyed grimalkins, came from under the kitchen stove, just as the Queen of Sheba, a white cat with golden eyes, sprang to the floor from a curtained shelf; and Ebenezer, a most unmitigatedly yellow specimen, sidled up and coquetted about the old man's legs, while he looked askance at the boy.

" All bu-tees, be n't they, ev'ry one on 'em? " Uncle Billy said admiringly, as he put down some parcels he had brought, and turned to Captain Jack, who was stooping to caress Ebenezer.

" Yes. But I do like the Queen of Sheba best; and yet she will never let me pet her."

" Jest lek ther rest o' her sex, my lad," the old man declared; " ye see she 's got cap-tious notions."

" Huh? " And Captain Jack looked up inquiringly into the good-natured face above him.

" I mean, thet lek some fair leddies, she leks ter mek b'lieve she teks no sort o' stock in folks dancin' 'tendance on her. But jest ye let her 'lone, an' pet ther rest o' ther lot; then see how quick my leddy 'll come purrin' 'round ye. An' now, my lad, I 'm goin' down ter ther beach, 'bout thet dory. Ye 'd best

come 'long, an' see how ter do it for yerself some o' these fine days."

"Do you mean when I am a sailor, Uncle Billy? For you know I shall be one when I 'm big."

"Not jest a common sailor-man, Cap'n Jack," the old man said, his eyes beginning to twinkle, "for ye see thet would n't read well in hist'ry. Ye must l'arn ter be a commodore. Nothin' short o' commodore 'll do ye. Hi, Commodore Harwood, I salute ye!"

With this he straightened himself up and threw one foot back, while he brought his hand to his peak in regular man-o'-war fashion, to the great delight of his small companion.

The two, accompanied by all the cats, were soon down on the beach; and Uncle Billy, having laid aside his bunch of oakum, drove Ebenezer and Moses away from the tar bucket. Then, with his hat hanging on the back of his head, he proceeded to thump and sound the bottom and sides of the injured dory, puffing and humming to himself the while.

At length, as he began to stop the gap, the humming resolved itself into something like a tune, until finally he opened his lips and growled forth what he doubtless intended as a song:

"There was a little man, and he hed a little horse;
High diddle, low diddle, dee!
An' he tied a little cat-skin ter his tail,
High diddle, low diddle, dee!"

This was for the edification of Captain Jack, who sat with clasped hands and eager eyes, watching the old man.

Presently he asked with a sly smile, "Tell me, Uncle Billy, — how is it you do spell 'rheumatism'?"

This was an old and much worn joke between these two; but, no matter how often repeated, it was always enjoyed by both of them.

Uncle Billy paused in his work, and cocked his hat to one side of his head. Then, giving a queer twist to his face, he drawled out, "Wa'l, Cap'n, when ther sailor-man says it on goin' inter ther tavern — says it ter ther landlady, it's 'rum-it-is-'m.' An' then when he gits too much o' thet rum aboard, it's 'room-it-is-'m!'"

They both laughed loud and long, while several of the cats came from some seaweed at which they had been sniffing, and rubbed against Uncle Billy's legs.

After a while the old man said, "What d' ye think I found 'long shore last week, my lad?" And he began to fumble in his pockets.

"What was it, Uncle Billy? Please tell me," the child asked eagerly, watching for the reappearance of the old sailor's big brown fingers.

"This." And he laid a bright golden button in the small hand outstretched for it. "'T was washed ashore, most lekly; an' I found it lyin' in a tangle o' chips an' seaweed. P'r'aps some poor woman might hev hed it on when she went down in a wreck, for it's surely thet sort o' frippery."

Captain Jack looked thoughtfully at the shining button, as he touched it gently with his small forefinger.

"What shall you do with it, Uncle Billy?" he

asked, lifting his tawny eyes to the kindly ones bent upon his face.

"Why, I 'lowed thet I 'd give it to ye, — thet is, if ye wanted it. I've no sort o' use for sech stuff."

"Oh, will you?" the child exclaimed delightedly. "I should like to show it to Loleta; and she can tell me a story about it."

"Why, — how kin she," was the inquiry, "when she don't know nothin' o' ther p'tic'lars?"

"She does often guess such things; and they are such lovely stories!"

"Wa'l, then, my lad, mebbe she 'll guess out all 'bout thet little bit o' gold, jest for ther sake o' pleasurin' ye." And his eyes wandered out contentedly over the sea, blue as lapus-lazuli, its surface scarcely ruffled by the soft breeze coming joyously toward the land.

"Uncle Billy, what do you s'pose the shells and pebbles do think when the sea does first wash over them, — when the tide does come in?"

Captain Jack had placed the button carefully in his pocket, and was now ready to take up another line of investigation.

"I don't 'xactly know, my lad," replied the old man, looking down lovingly into the bright face. "P'r'aps they think jest ther same as clams, an' sweetmeats, an' sech-like; an' thet 's sort o' joyful, I guess, for ye 've heerd o' bein' as 'happy as a clam,' hev n't ye? An' yet" — ruminatingly — "I can't say as I ever heerd o' sech things thinkin'. An' if clams can't think, how can rocks, an' shells, an' ther like?"

"I don't know, Uncle Billy; only I sometimes do think I can hear shells laugh inside."

"Ah, lad, lad, what fancies ye hev in thet small head o' your'n."

The old sailor wagged his own grizzled head, and went to work again, with the boy sitting on the sand, as he looked off over the water and sang softly to himself, while Moses and Aaron, in company with Ebenezer, came and rubbed trustingly against him.

CHAPTER XVIII

MARGARET, her father, and Doctor Jasper took tea that evening at the Harwood house. Captain Jack was seated next to his grandmother; and he surveyed the Doctor with exceedingly friendly and satisfied eyes.

"Does not he look like our soldier, Grandmère,—*mon Docteur*, as I said?" he had whispered eagerly to Madame, who interrupted her talk with Captain Leslie to say gently, and in a low tone, "Sh—h, *mon douce*." But she glanced smilingly at the Doctor, knowing that he had heard the child's words.

Doctor Jasper had been looking at her admiringly; for if she appeared queenly when he saw her for the first time, dressed simply, and after an all-night's anxious vigil, she was still more so now, attired richly, and in the most exquisite taste.

Loleta sat opposite, robed in some sheeny green stuff that reminded him of the spray-bedewed seaweed along shore; and other than a single strand of tiny pearls about her neck, she wore no ornament.

He looked from her to her beautiful grandmother, and then at the great clusters of sweet-smelling flowers in the centre of the table. Then his eyes went back again to the fair young face, and the imperious one near it.

In after years he could never think of this scene, and of these two, without associating with them the cream and snow-white, the pale violet and dark purple petals of the flowers that filled all the air with their fragrance.

The mild light of many candles in tall silver candelabra and girandoles, hung thickly with glass drops, filled the room; and the warm air was permeated by the faint, sweet odor of the melting wax.

It was a delight to Doctor Jasper, while seeming to listen, as did the others, to the bright reminiscent talk of Madame Harwood and the Captain, to watch the girl opposite him, about whose words and looks was a subtle transparency, at once intangible and irresistible, coupled as it was with an intellectual refinement that was intensely fascinating.

But as to Madame Harwood, while enjoying keenly her brilliancy and wit, as well as the satisfaction she afforded his senses, the Doctor could not quite rid himself of the feeling that — as he had suggested one day to Margaret — she was "playing a part."

Not that there was any indication — even to his acute discernment — of hypocrisy or insincerity, — not the slightest lack of hospitality or heartiness. But it seemed — at least to him — as if back of her bright manner and flow of words there lay an anxiety she was endeavoring to put aside, or to overlook for the time being, but which shadowed her mood, despite her strong will and powers of self-control.

There was something of this same thing about Loleta. But it was even less pronounced, and would have escaped Doctor Jasper's notice, had it not

been for what he saw, or thought he saw, in her grandmother. And, as he recalled the girl's bearing during their outing of the day before, he wondered if her present nervousness was not a reflection of Madame Harwood's mood, rather than from anything arising within herself.

This feeling, which had become impressed upon his mind shortly after they seated themselves at the table, grew in strength as he noted the strange light that would now and again gather in Madame's black eyes, and how her brows would lower and contract for an instant, and the quick glances she cast toward the door when it was opened by Zabette, who attended upon Captain Jack, leaving the dapper mulatto butler to serve the others of the company.

"I know very little of shells or seaweeds," he made haste to reply to a question she asked him; "that is, from a scientific standpoint."

"I should say this was a good place and time to acquire such knowledge, if you care to, my lad," said the Captain laughingly.

Before Doctor Jasper could answer, Madame Harwood spoke to him again, now looking at him somewhat curiously.

"You have never been here before, I believe?"

He glanced toward Captain Leslie and Margaret; but they were joking with each other, and neither of them had heard Madame Harwood's remark.

"Never to stop any time, until now," he replied, —"until I came here last month."

Captain Jack now broke in impetuously, addressing the Doctor.

"I do know something about seaweeds."

"Eh, — what's that?" inquired the Captain, who sat at the other end of the table. "What's that you say, young man?"

"I do know all about the sort they call 'puppy-dogs' tails,'" answered the lad.

Every one smiled, — even Mammy Zabette, who was removing a plate from in front of him.

"Down at Uncle Billy's I did find some in the sand the other day," he went on. "And he did show me how to float it in the water, and slip some paper under it; and then how to keep it stuck on the paper, when I did pull it out very carefully. It did lie on the paper, stuck out, and did look just like Mrs. Wilson's poodle-dog's tail, 'cept it was green."

They laughed at this, and Captain Leslie said, "I know the sort you mean, my lad, for I have fixed it in the same way, many a time, when I was a youngster. Aye, and so has your grandfather, as well; for we used to collect and press seaweeds when we were boys together."

At this allusion to her husband Doctor Jasper saw Madame Harwood's white lids droop until the black lashes touched her cheeks; and glancing at Loleta, he noted the loving look with which her eyes sought her grandmother's face.

But the next minute Madame, with a gay laugh, told of some incident connected with one of their sojourns in Russia. And as the Doctor listened to her graphic words and unaffected mirth he found it difficult to understand what he had heard in regard to her reserve and hauteur.

In truth she puzzled him very much. He felt that no one could look upon her without realizing how truly she was entitled to be called "La Grande Dame;" and he was satisfied that there was something very hard and cold in her nature. Yet he could not fail to see how her manner toward both her grandchildren, as well as theirs toward her, seemed utterly inconsistent with any possible unkindness, either of act or thought.

"Who knows, my dear Captain Nat," she said presently in reply to a prophecy the old sailor had made concerning himself, as they were about leaving the table, — "who shall say" — and she laughed gayly — "but that some coming year may see you sailing over our oceans again, — the oceans you and I have crossed so many times, and which we know so well; yes, and love so well."

Her black eyes smiled a little mockingly into Margaret's blue ones, now holding the wistful light that sometimes gathered tears, when her father expressed a longing for the sea.

But the girl only smiled herself, although faintly, and shook her head.

She had the faculty of avoiding argument, in small matters as well as large, dreading it as something leading very often to general, all-around unpleasantness. And Margaret could never feel happy unless everything about her was in accord.

As they passed from the dining-room Doctor Jasper was surprised to hear the clear whistle of some notes that were decidedly familiar to him, — none other than the army call of "Taps."

Loleta saw his start of surprise, and smiled at it.

"That is my troopial; he hangs in the little 'den,' as grandmère does call it. Come and see him."

They all followed her into a medium-sized room, octagon-shaped, and whose furnishings were like those of a museum; for it was filled with curiosities gathered from many quarters of the world.

There were south sea trophies,—long, sharp spears; garments and mats of quaintly woven grasses and feathers; two immense shields, shaped like the back of a turtle, and resounding like a drum-head when struck; barbarous-looking knives and hatchets; ivory spoons and ornaments; Chinese carvings, and musky smelling woods, together with ivory idols from the far east. And upon an exquisitely carved cabinet of ebony there was a wondrously wrought fan of sandal-wood, that made the neighboring air sweet with its mystic fragrance.

Then there were alabaster dishes and boxes and vases, from Italy; and copies, in the same mineral, of Saint Peter's and the Leaning Tower. In fact the mantel, side-tables, and hearth were littered with curios from almost every country and clime.

A few easy chairs, with coverings made from Egyptian saddle-bags, were in the centre of the floor, and over one of them hung the gayly-hued mantle of a toreador.

The troopial's gilded cage was hanging by one of the windows. He was a bright, lively fellow, his jetty coat brilliant with dashes of orange, and his breast a glow of the same color.

He had — so Loleta explained — formerly belonged to some southern friends, — army people, and had caught many of the bugle calls.

As they stood watching him he gave "Taps" once more, while he fluttered about proudly. Then he sounded "Reveille" with surprising effect.

Madame asked the gentlemen if they would smoke here, in the "den," or go out upon the piazza facing the sea.

"It will be cooler and pleasanter out there," she said, as she led the way; "and we can sit and enjoy the music the girls will give us."

Then turning to Doctor Jasper, she asked, "Have you a special liking for any particular composer?"

"Yes, Madame, — Beethoven."

"He is also my favorite above all others," she said with an odd smile. "His music has for me, as I think it must have for all who understand it, the sound of the sea, and of its winds. And these winds blow pleasanter to us rovers than do the land breezes. What say you, Captain Nat?"

"You speak the truth, Madame," he replied; and there was a seeming touch of sadness to his voice.

"Please don't talk in that way, Madame Harwood," Margaret said earnestly, although she was smiling. "You 'll have papa running away from me, for he is just pining for a sail across the seas; I can hear it in his voice." And she clung closely to him as they followed their hostess toward the music-room, whose windows opened out to a broad piazza.

"I do so love the sea," Madame said, still speaking to the Doctor as they stepped outside. "And when

the spray flies about here, as it does during easterly storms and very high winds, I almost feel that I am on the ocean once more."

Captain Leslie was listening; and a sigh sprang to his lips as he seated himself. Margaret heard it, but said nothing, as she drew Captain Jack close to her, so that he might snuggle himself under her light wrap, as the two sat together.

The men had just lit their cigars when Loleta, who had remained in the music-room, began the first movement of the Moonlight Sonata.

It was full of all that Madame Harwood had said, and fuller of other things for Doctor Jasper.

The noise of the sea, and the murmur of the winds, seemed interwoven with the sounds coming from within, under the skilful fingers that sent the weird melodies throbbing and beating out into the night, under the sky and stars.

The winds seemed to sink and swoon in the chords, like voices lifting themselves up to where eyes — hopeful or despairing — were seeking God amid the stars that burned so calmly in the silent skies, — voices full of tender entreaties that fainted for replies, — pauses of sorrow that passed into sighs of misery.

Then, fluttering back on the clear, sweet tones, came eddies of tenderest melody, falling upon the soul as does the benediction that follows prayer.

And then it all died away into a silence that of itself was throbbing.

It was several minutes before this was broken, save by the sounds of the sea and the night winds,

which seemed to be echoing the passionate music, but faintly, like organ notes dying away amid the aisles of a great cathedral.

All this had spoken to Noel Jasper's soul, even as his soul spoke to him of its love. Her presence, her voice, her music, — they thrilled him in a way unknown before in all his life, and his heart throbbed to paining.

No one spoke. Madame Harwood sighed, moved softly, and drew the black lace closer about her white face and graceful shoulders, while the light that came through the open windows struck sparkles from the many gems upon her snowy fingers.

Music it was that broke the silence. Loleta was playing the D flat Major Prelude of Chopin; that wistful-sounding melody, touched throughout with such a sadness, — a plaintiveness like that which stirs amid the leaves before a summer rain, and when it patters on the roof, and then comes from the eaves in tinkling drops, that soothe, even when stirring restless thoughts, and dim the window-panes like passionate tears.

As the last echoes of this died away, Loleta came out. She said nothing; but seating herself near Margaret, who was huddled within her wrap, with little Captain Jack close to her, picked up a guitar and held it out.

"Oh, no," Margaret said quickly. "I cannot, Loleta, — at least not now."

Doctor Jasper had turned to Loleta, wishing to tell her how greatly he had enjoyed the music. Yet when he tried to speak, he was silent; for conven-

tional words seemed tame, and he dared not utter his thoughts.

But Captain Leslie appeared to find no difficulty in expressing himself; and he did so in his usual nautical way, causing Madame Harwood to laugh softly to herself.

"No, no," Margaret repeated to Loleta. "I can sing nothing. But I will gladly play for you, if you will sing."

Doctor Jasper was looking at Madame Harwood, and saw her start as one of the servants came out upon the piazza. He was a bright-appearing lad of twelve, with a skin like *café-au-lait*, curling hair, big, shining eyes, and intensely red lips.

"What do you come here for, Louis?" his mistress demanded sternly.

The boy clutched at his curls in a frightened way.

"If ye pleasy, Mam, Zabette done sen' me fo' Miche Jacques; an' I done been 'roun' evvy place. An' den I yeh de talk, an' — "

His fast-faltering voice became hopelessly lost, and he stood staring helplessly at Madame Harwood.

"Very well," she said quietly, and, as it seemed to Doctor Jasper, with an air of relief. "Come, Jacques, *mon bijou*," she added, turning to where the child was sitting.

He shyly kissed Margaret's bended face, and stole out from her clasping arms and warm wrap to bid the others good-night.

Loleta handed the guitar to Margaret, and rose, as if intending to accompany him. But Madame

Harwood spoke quite sharply to her in French, bidding her to sit down again.

Loleta stood a moment as if irresolute; then, with dropped lids, she seated herself silently.

"Sing for Doctor Jasper some of our creole songs, *ma mie*," her grandmother said, a curious insistence sounding in her voice.

"Yes," added Margaret, as she began to strum softly upon the guitar; "and I 'll play the accompaniment."

"Pipe away, lass, — do," urged Captain Leslie. "I should love to hear you."

"What shall it be, Margot?"

As she asked this, Loleta looked up at the stars; and Doctor Jasper thought he saw the glitter of tears in her eyes.

"Let me see," replied Margaret. "It must be something I know, if I am to play the accompaniment. But you must sing two, at least."

"No, no, — oh, no!" was the pleading answer. "One is quite enough."

Doctor Jasper here interposed. "Let us secure one, at least, Miss Margaret," he said smilingly. "If you disclose your entire programme too soon, we may not have any at all."

She did not reply, but began playing an accompaniment, and softly hummed a few bars. Then she broke off to say, "That 's the first one we 'll have, Loleta, if you please; I don't know the name of it."

"It is called 'Quand Mo Te,'" Madame Harwood said. "It is a slave song; and the music is very characteristic."

Margaret once more struck up the accompaniment, and Loleta sang.

Doctor Jasper called himself a fairly good French scholar; and yet the words might have been Arabic, for all the connected meaning they conveyed to him. But they floated out on the quaint music with a pathos which was poignantly sweet.

When the song was ended he said something to this effect; and Madame Harwood's low laugh jarred him a little as she replied, "Our slaves mangled the French in their own fashion, and it is perplexing to one not a native. The words of many of our songs have a fine African ring; but one must not attempt to translate them into English, and hope to keep up the illusion, for most of the words are rank nonsense."

Doctor Jasper made some appropriate reply, and then turned to Margaret, who was still touching the guitar.

"Aren't you going to carry out the rest of your programme?" he asked.

"Certainly I am," she replied absently, as if her thoughts had been straying.

Her father noticed this, and asked laughingly if she had not yet awakened from the long sleep she took after her Danger-Head picnic.

"Danger-Head!" Madame Harwood echoed. "I should think that none of you could ever wish to hear the name again."

"Why, Madame, I would not have missed that experience for a great deal," said the Doctor, with such an undertone of seriousness that she looked at him sharply and questioningly.

"Indeed no," added Margaret, now thoroughly alert; "none of us would, I am sure, except perhaps Mrs. Bessly and Uncle Billy. But come, Loleta," — turning to her, — "now for that other song I was thinking about. You know it goes this way." And she hummed it.

"That is one of the prettiest of all," said Madame Harwood. "In character it is much like the Spanish gypsy music. Both of them have the same curious repetitions in minor monotone, like some of the Oriental melodies — especially the Arabic."

As Loleta's second song came to an end Doctor Jasper saw a large meteor shoot across the sky; and a servant being in the act of lighting one of the upper rooms, a brilliant gleam illumined the wings of an enormous bat that happened to be flying past.

This peculiar circumstance brought to his mind the recollection of a large painting at home, which, in his childhood, had held for him a horrible fascination.

It represented the fall of Lucifer from Heaven.

The banished angel was sinking through the air upon great dusky wings, toward the vaporous abyss beneath. The radiance of the Paradise he had lost still shone over and around him, lighting palely his dark curls and olive skin, and giving an added glitter to the black eyes gazing at the onlooker in imperious and fiendish delight.

The thought came — and unwittingly — to the Doctor, of how suggestive of this painted terror of his childhood was Madame Harwood's dark beauty, lighted by the dim glow from the music-room.

He was looking at her with this in his mind, when she turned her eyes slowly toward him and asked, "Are you practising here, Doctor Jasper?"

"No, Madame; that is, only in a very small and desultory way. I have been called upon to help two or three of Uncle Billy's and Mrs. Bessly's relatives and friends; but, beyond this, I have n't attempted to poach upon good Doctor Mix's preserves."

"As I thought." And there was sufficient light for him to see the smile curling her lips. "Stopping here for a rest, during the summer days?"

"I do not yet know as to that, Madame."

There was something in his tone that gave to her own a note of surprise as she asked, "Is it possible that you can like this sleepy old town well enough to think of remaining here?"

"I can very readily believe such to be the fact," he answered smilingly. But he saw her eyes flash, and her brows contract, making him aware of having said something that for some reason did not quite please her. And during the rest of the evening he noticed that her manner toward him grew more reserved.

He thought of this later on, when he was alone in his room; and it came to him for the first time to wonder seriously what he was to do, should his heart's wish meet with a denial.

He asked himself how it would be with him if his love should not be returned, or if Madame Harwood should refuse to let it run a smooth course.

He recalled the saying that "sublunary happiness consists principally in being well deceived."

Was he being well deceived? Was it possible that this wonderful dream now — and so suddenly — absorbing all his energies and hopes, and making his life a new and more desirable thing, — was this to meet with shipwreck and disaster? The very thought made him feel as if it were already so.

Then somewhat aside from this, and as a matter affecting his personal pride, was the thought of the alteration in Madame Harwood's manner toward him. This made him uneasy — almost angry.

During the latter part of the evening she — as has been said — seemed to withdraw more within herself. Her bearing toward him underwent a marked change; and when he took his leave she either forgot, or omitted intentionally, to ask him to call again. Then, too, it appeared as if she tried to prevent Loleta from showing him other than the scantest courtesy when they parted.

He knew that Captain Leslie had been aware of this, for he caught the look of unsmiling astonishment his usually laughing eyes bestowed upon Madame Harwood, and the glance he exchanged with Margaret.

He had noted as well how almost fatherly was the Captain's tender good-night to Loleta, and recalled how silent Margaret and her father were as they walked home, scarcely speaking until their own gate was reached, and he parted with them.

His mind dwelt upon these things for a long time; and when at last he fell asleep, it was to dream.

Again he was looking at the painting of Lucifer;

but now the face was that of Madame Harwood, smiling mockingly at him from out of flowing draperies.

She was pointing to the water beneath her, where, fast-bound to black timbers, rising and falling in the rough sea that tumbled her unbound hair, he saw Loleta, her straining eyes gazing up into his own.

The full moon lay low down in the sky, sending a baleful path along the water; and slowly down this path floated a great hulk, coming nearer and nearer, until he feared it would pass over her.

Closer and yet closer it came, until, with a wild, choking cry, he stretched out his arms to rescue her from the deadly peril, and so awoke.

The horror of his dream was so real, that it was long before he was able to sleep again. And so he lay with wide-open eyes, listening to the beating of the surf; and this, which usually rested him, now filled his mind with vague forebodings.

CHAPTER XIX

THE following Monday was, as to breeze and sunshine, what Uncle Billy described as "serperlative;" and, in the afternoon, Doctor Jasper, still restless and very much out of sorts, was easily persuaded to join the old man and the senior and junior Ayres when they went out to their joint nets with the "Pretty Sally."

He had gone to church the day before; but with such new feelings and thoughts as made that other Sunday seem many weeks past. And he had come away after service with a far greater disappointment than his common-sense tried to tell him he had any reason to feel. For there were other Sundays ahead; and, better still, many other days when he might hope to see Loleta.

And so why should he be so downhearted on account of that particular Sunday when the Harwood pew was empty?

After the nets were emptied and reset, and the little craft was turned about for home, the mood he had been able to shake off for a time seemed to return in full force. He sat silent, and away from the others, his abstracted eyes looking indifferently at the glories of the sunset, until its splendor faded away, and the night came down.

The hollow flush that still lingered in the west had grown pallid and vague as the boat touched the steps of the old wharf. The green water had taken a darker shade; and over in the east the first star was blinking weakly through the clouds.

Doctor Jasper went ashore, and walked slowly toward Mrs. Bessly's, his head bowed, and his mind filled with strange and anxious thoughts.

If these few days had been productive of such a heavy heart, because of the uncertainty of happiness for the future, what, he asked himself, would the sure wrecking of all his dreams and hopes mean for him?

"Dear, — deary me, Doctor Jasper," said Mrs. Bessly a little later, as they sat at tea, and she peered with kindly eyes across the table, "ye hev n't got a headache, I hope."

He answered, "No," in an absorbed way, as he listlessly stirred the contents of his cup; but he did not lift his eyes.

"Mebbe it 's the lamplight thet meks ye look so sort o' pindlin'-like. An' I thought mebbe the sun was too much for yer head, 'though thet ought to be used to sech things, hed n't it? Ye hardly ever go out thet ye don't tek up on the water."

The Doctor made some sort of reply. But he ate his supper without saying much of anything, while Mrs. Bessly continued to cast furtive and anxious glances at him. And, although she meandered on in her usual florid style, she refrained from any more personal remarks.

But the good woman was truly solicitous in regard to him. He had come to her somewhat broken up by reason of his unsatisfactory war experience; and she had from the first taken it upon herself to assume a rather motherly supervision of him and his doings.

As soon as tea was over he lit a cigar and went out for a stroll. And as Mrs. Bessly and Jane were washing the dishes, the former said, apropos of some remark her niece had made about the Doctor, "Now if it was spring, I 'd surely surgest sassafras tea for him. But bein' as it ain't, I don't know 'bout it. And then, too, he bein' a doctor, he ought to know jest what sort o' physikin' his stummick, or liver, or whatever it is, needs. But I must own up thet his clear skin an' bright eyes don't look as if neither of 'em was out o' kilter." Then, in a tone of rapture, "Ain't his eyes jest beautiful, Jane!"

The girl did not reply, but opened her own eyes still wider at her aunt's unusual appreciation of personal attractiveness.

Mrs. Bessly did not seem to expect any answer, for she went on talking, and polishing a platter.

"An' I jest hope them eyes o' his'n are tekin' in all they should, these days, 'bout Marg'ret Leslie; for he 'll find no likelier girl in the hull world. To be sure, there 's Loleta Harwood; but she 's not his sort, — not at all. An' 'sides, he 's scursely seen 'nough o' her to mek him think o' her."

Jane had carried a pile of clean dishes to the closet, and her voice sounded muffled as it came through the partly-closed door.

"P'r'aps, though, he *has* been thinkin' of her, an' that 's what 's ailin' him now!"

"What!" And Mrs. Bessly whirled around on her heels to face this startling bomb from so unexpected a quarter. "D' ye know what ye 're sayin', Jane, or be ye gone clean crazy? Who ever heerd sech nonsense? But there, — I 've no bus'ness to be talkin' 'bout sech things myself, neither. But mind, Jane Bessly, — don't ye never breathe another sech word ag'in, or ye 'll mek more trouble than ye kin ever undo. Jest s'pose Madam should hear o' yer sayin' sech a thing, or any o' the help up at their house!"

"I meant no harm," said the girl, with a scared look, as she emerged from the closet.

"Sho," replied her aunt, now with an affectation of indifference, "it ain't nothin' but his stummick or liver, if it 's anythin' at all."

The days came and went, one much like the other, in this quiet old place by the sea. Each day brought something that seemed to be new, and yet the new was the same thing over again. But with it was always a vague expectation of its being different to-morrow.

This came to be Doctor Jasper's mood during most of the hours. He was now living in the world created anew for those who are in love, — for whom is wrought the miracle of a new Heaven and a new earth.

Summing up the number of times he had seen Loleta, they were not many; and they were to him like so many dreams. To be sure, he had never

seen her without Margaret or little Captain Jack being present, always one, and often both of them. But this did not matter so very much, for he had seen her, and heard her voice; he had her looks and words to treasure. And for the world of love wherein he was living, a glance from her lustrous eyes was a volume, — a few words from her lips made a library for many a day's perusal.

Nearly two weeks had passed since that night on Danger-Head, and there had been no more similar excursions, although he and Captain Jack had made several fishing trips with Uncle Billy. And once, Margaret and her father had sailed down with him to Skuttle-Hump, where the grasshoppers were now becoming scarcer, and the golden-rod beginning to flaunt its yellow tufts.

The Doctor suspected — although from no definite reason — that Loleta had been prevented by her grandmother from joining in any of these outings. It was, as Margaret said one day, "Simply the same old refrain: 'Loleta could not go.'"

Once, since that evening at the Harwood house, Doctor Jasper had called there, going with Captain Leslie, and at the latter's suggestion. But it was a very stiff ceremony as compared with the former visit, and he was glad when the Captain rose to go. They saw only Madame Harwood and Captain Jack, who insisted upon fetching Topaz, his marmoset, into the room, to be seen and caressed by *mon Docteur*. As for Loleta, her grandmother explained that she had been suffering all the afternoon with a severe headache, and was then sleeping.

The Doctor's relatives had given him over to his "barbarous pursuits," as they saw fit to call his present manner of life, and were enjoying themselves in their own fashion for the remainder of the season, as he was informed by an occasional letter from his aunt or sister.

And so he drifted and dreamed, while the summer days went by.

Then came a day when most of the townsfolk were shut within-doors by one of the gales due along shore at this time of the year.

It was a day with a jagged horizon of black waves, their rock-like forms set against a windy background of ashen skies, while overhead the clouds came driving like ragged tendrils, streaming out as the wind tossed and tore them.

The sea broke thunderingly along the shore in great rollers, shattered on the rocks and headlands, then to fall in showers of foam and spray. And these, recoiling along the beach, left gleaming rows and masses of tangled seaweed, fragments of wreckage, disturbed shells, and glittering pebbles.

Doctor Jasper sat by his closed window, reading, or watching the tumult of the sea, as the inclination took him, having declined Mrs. Bessly's urgent invitation to come down into "the settin' room," where she had made a fire to "drive out the storm."

Up at the Leslie house Captain Nat was fuming, as he wandered back and forth between the fire and window, pausing now and again to look out, with Fin, gravely sedate, marching alongside him.

The Captain and Margaret had been playing many

games of cribbage and backgammon, until they both were wearied. And he was now saying to her, "I've stopped home again to-day, to please you, my lass; but to-morrow, storm or shine, I'll please myself, and go down to Pilot's-Head. Peter has got to be seen about those potatoes, if for nothing else."

Margaret, who had been huddled comfortably in a big cushioned chair by the fire, now came to the window, and clasping her hands around her father's arm, rubbed her cheek against his rough coat.

"Now, Papa Leslie, you're getting cross. And no wonder; for this weather is enough to spoil the temper of a saint, to say nothing of an old sailor's. But it surely can't last much longer; do you think it can?"

He took a hand from his coat-pocket to stroke her hair, as he still looked critically at the sky, showing through the tossing branches of the elms.

"I've been thinking this is about the last of it, Peggy; and it's high time, too. But I'll go to-morrow and see about those potatoes, even if the wind veers, and brings up more storm."

She looked up at him and laughed, as she tickled him under the chin with her slender forefinger. But he pulled down her hand, saying, while he tried in vain to keep a smile from wrinkling the corners of his mouth, "I shall! And so you need n't try any of your wheedling, my lass."

But the storm was gone next morning, and bright sunshine flooded the drenched land. A joyous breeze was blowing, and piles of white clouds

swept across the blue sky, checkering the leaping sea with acres of violet shadows, and making the rocky headlands seem to open and close under the alternations of sun and shade. The gulls flew screaming about, or hung, poised with exquisite grace, to the stiff breeze. The surf along shore shone like snow, the falling breakers adding to its whiteness; and inshore the trees tossed their limbs boisterously, while the flying leaves danced and glanced glitteringly in the sun.

By nine o'clock, Captain Leslie, happy as any schoolboy out for a holiday, was on the way to Pilot's-Head. Margaret was with him; and he had borrowed a neighbor's horse and buggy, which — especially the former — he was managing with much of that skill for which sea-faring men are famed.

Margaret, who was a bit nervous, had just said, "Now, Papa, please watch the horse, and stop looking at everything else. I 'm sure you 're not noticing the way he seems trying to go over toward that ditch. He 'll certainly upset us if you 're not careful."

"Not the slightest fear of it, lass," was the cheery reply. "Let the poor beast get a bunch of green stuff now and then, if he wants it; and that 's all he is after now. Such things are good for him. But I'll confess to you, my dear, that if a horse could be handled by hoisting him, like a sail, or could be rounded to by throwing out an anchor, or if I could steer him with a rudder, instead of these reins, I should feel more at home. But don't you worry, Peg, my girl; I drove this same fellow the

last time I went down to the Head, and we got on famously with each other."

Doctor Jasper had called at the Captain's house, and not finding him at home, stopped a short time in the well-stocked library. Then, taking Fin for a companion, he went off for a ramble.

It was well along in the afternoon when he returned to Mrs. Bessly's; and not many minutes after he was seated in his room there came an uncertain, hesitating knock at the door.

To his quick "Come in," there was no responsive action, but only the same irresolute, subdued tapping.

"Come in!" he called again, and louder than before, wondering if his visitor were deaf.

This time the invitation was so far accepted that the knob was turned carefully, and the door moved slowly on its hinges. Then a whiff of tobacco smoke entered the apartment, followed by the shaggy head of old Sam Ayres.

"Alone, — be ye?" he queried, peering about in a way indicative of suspicion.

"Why, yes; of course I am," the Doctor said, somewhat surprised. "What do you want?" And rising, he placed a chair opposite the one he had vacated, and invited his unusual visitor to enter.

Sam Ayres' loose-jointed body followed his unkempt head into the room; and after softly closing the door, he turned to look carefully at the latch, to assure himself that it was really fastened. He then tiptoed over to the chair Doctor Jasper had placed for him, and seated himself gingerly, holding his wreck of a hat in his nervous hands.

"Jane, downstairs, said for me to come right up; Marm Bessly's out," he began, by way of explanation. "An' I hed to see ye p'tic'lar 'bout suthin'."

His voice seemed to sound even hoarser than usual; and his eyes shifted about uneasily, taking in all the details of the room, but avoiding Doctor Jasper's face.

"Oh, that's all right, Mr. Ayres," the Doctor said good-naturedly. "And now what can I do for you?"

"I hed to come to tell ye suthin'," the old man repeated, speaking slowly, and with a curious look coming into his eyes, which now, at last, met Doctor Jasper's.

"Yes?" the latter said inquiringly.

"Bill sent me."

"Uncle Billy?"

"Yes." Then in what was meant to be a whisper, "Suthin' queer hev took place."

"Indeed; and what is it?" But Doctor Jasper's voice did not express any great amount of interest.

"A strange man hev su'cided," came in the same hoarse *sotto voce.*

"What?" And the Doctor's voice showed more animation.

"Ez I tell ye. He killed hisself up to Cove."

Then, in his own clumsy fashion, old Ayres went on to tell how, that same forenoon, some boys who had been in swimming at "the Cove" came rushing down the beach with the story that after finishing their bath, and while they were sitting on the rocks,

drying themselves, a strange man had come reeling and gesticulating along the shore, and waded out until the water reached almost to his waist. Then, as he stood there with his back to them, they saw him hold something up to his head, — something that flashed brightly in the sun. A second later they heard the report of a pistol, saw the man sway forward, and then fall beneath the water.

The tide was coming in; and the men, taking a boat, and with the boys to guide them, had little difficulty in locating the body.

Looking over the side of the boat, down through the green water where the seaweed grew rank, they could see the dead man, lying face down, with his arms spread out.

"They drawed him up with some boat-hooks," old Sam ended by saying, "an' 't was Uncle Billy hisself thet grabbed holt o' his shoulder as it come out'n the water. An' then the man's head dropped forrard in a pitiful sort o' way, Doctor Jarsper; an' he be a man with most onusual broad shoulders an' chest. Then Billy yelled for us to pull ashore; an' so we did. We brung him to the old wharf, jest out here, sir; an' there he lies this minute, on some old sails. Lots hev seed him, but not a man jack on 'em ever laid eyes on him afore. I 've been up here twice for ye, but ye wa' n't in; an' Billy told me to step over ag'in, an' tell ye he was waitin' for ye now. Old Doctor Mix 's out'n town, an' his 'sistant ain't no good; an' Billy says there 's got to be a doctor, to say what 's to be done."

Doctor Jasper, who had been listening inter-

estedly, now arose; and the two men were soon upon their way to the old wharf.

The sun was low, but not yet set; and the light-house lamp was lit. One lonely fisherman, his dory well-filled with the afternoon's catch, was letting his oars lie idle, while he dipped his old felt hat into the water, and then sent the superfluous drops out in a bright shower, as he swirled it around before replacing it upon his head.

Several men — fishermen and sailors — were standing about near the building where lay the body of the dead stranger; and from a group sitting upon an overturned dory, Uncle Billy came forward. The others remained as they were, while he, with the Doctor and old Ayres, went along to the locked door of the shed-like place.

The old sailor produced a large key; and having with much dignity unfastened the door, they all entered, a stream of light going in with them, and a rush of wind that sounded dismally in the gloomy place.

Fishing tackle and nets lay scattered about, with here and there a stray oar, or a weather-beaten sail. And some oil-skins, topped by wide-brimmed sou'-westers, hung on pegs against the farthest wall, looking like reckless and despondent seamen who had hanged themselves.

Uncle Billy, without a word, led the way to some piled-up canvas, from which he threw back the remnant of a sail. And there before them lay the unknown dead.

Doctor Jasper went upon his knees to look with

closer scrutiny at the corpse. It was that of a handsome man, still young, and with the form of an athlete. The features were regular, and clean-cut; the well-rounded jaw had a firm look; and a thick brown moustache almost concealed the rather heavy lips.

The Doctor observed all these details; and he saw that the man had been dead several hours. Then he passed his hand slowly over the wide-open, staring blue eyes; but their lids would not close.

"Ain't he grand-looking?" said Uncle Billy.

The old man stood with hands thrust deep in his pockets; and he was smoking a short black pipe as he gazed down into the uncovered face, over which the light now came streaming in.

There was no reply; and after waiting a moment, he asked, "Know him, Doctor, — ever seed him afore?"

Doctor Jasper still looked fixedly at the dead face as he answered, "No."

Uncle Billy now took a hand from one pocket, and removed the pipe from his mouth.

"There wa'n't nothin' in his clothes," he said; "an' nary a mark on 'em ter trace him by. An' — "

There came a queer sound from behind them, and they all turned, to see little Captain Jack standing close by, staring with terrified eyes at the dead man, while his winsome face, usually so bright, and so often beaming with merriment, was now strangely distorted by terror.

"Shiver my timbers, lollypop! How come ye to be here?" exclaimed Uncle Billy, making a motion to take hold of him. But the child sprang against

Doctor Jasper, clutching him tightly, and burying his face in his friend's neck.

The Doctor said nothing; but, rising to his feet, he held Captain Jack closely, and hurried out, leaving the living men to cover the dead.

While they were doing this, Uncle Billy growled, "Old begum of a grandame, — tyin' him up, when there ain't no need o' tyin', an' then lettin' him loose at this hour o' ther day, ter see sights thet mek old sea-dogs sick!"

Doctor Jasper did not pause when they were outside the door, but took the child out to a headland that overlooked all the harbor. And here, away from every one, he sat down and drew the little lad into his lap, while he smoothed his hair and spoke soothingly to him.

But Captain Jack made no answer, and only clung all the closer, quivering now and then as with a nervous chill.

"You ought not to be down here at this hour of the day, my dear little boy," the Doctor said, his caressing tone dulling any edge of rebuke there might be in his words. "How comes it that you are?"

The child's voice was hysterical with fright as he told how Mammy Zabette had come down to find a woman living near the wharf, and that he had accompanied her; that he wished to see *mon Docteur*, and she had let him go over to Mrs. Bessly's; and that there he met a boy who told him where his friend could be found.

Then the clasping arms slightly loosened their

hold about the Doctor's neck; and drawing back to look into the face above him, the child broke out impetuously, "Ah, *mon Docteur*, I do want to tell you something. Only you must never, never tell of it; for I cannot think what grandmère would say to me that I did talk of it to any one."

"Never mind about it now," the Doctor replied quietly, for he felt worried about the little fellow, whose eyes were still filled with a strange terror. "Wait until some other time, my boy, when you — "

"But no!" cried Captain Jack still more excitedly. "I do want to tell you now — right away. Please, *mon Docteur!* It is of a dream I did have, and I must tell you now of it." And he looked pleadingly into the man's troubled face.

For a few moments Doctor Jasper said nothing, but turned his face away from the small uplifted one, the tremulous lips and lovely eyes still pleading with eloquent silence.

He could not have explained to himself what it was that had made him feel a reluctance to encourage the child's confidence; but he was aware, for some reason he did not now understand, that he would rather not put the impulse aside.

Then, refusing to follow this instinct, and telling himself impatiently that, after all, it was only a childish dream he was about to hear, — something whose telling might divert Captain Jack's thoughts from the gruesome sight upon which he had so unfortunately stumbled, the Doctor thrust away his misgivings.

And so, with his love for the boy adding its argu-

ment to his own judgment as to what was best for him to do, he turned his eyes back to the agitated little face, and said, as he hugged the slight form still closer, "Very well, my little man; tell me all about it."

Captain Jack drew a long, sighing breath, and began at once, speaking now hurriedly, and again more composedly, as he was affected by what he was saying: —

"It was such a strange dream that I did have, *mon Docteur*. Loleta says I did dream it, and so does Mammy Zabette, too. It did happen, — oh, so long, long ago. And I was ill, away off somewhere, I don't know where; in a place I was in when I was a *bébé*, I do think.

"I do remember the white dresses I did have. I do remember the big trees, with queer big leaves, like I did never see here. And oranges, — woods and woods, all filled with oranges. It was hot — always hot days. And Mammy Zabette was there, and did fan me when I did sit still or lie down, with a great big thing that did hang from the top of the room. And she did make it fan with a string that did make it to feel like the wind blew cool.

"Grandmère and Loleta did live with me there. And Loleta did often cry, and did hug and kiss me; and I did hear grandmère say to her that she did not like her to. And once a big man did take me, and did run through the woods with me for a long time. And we did get to where were many other men; and they did make a big fire in the woods at night. The man that did take me away — I was 'fraid of him, for

he was very cross; and he did say he would never take me back to Loleta, — never. And then I did wake up, and I was in my little bed at grandmère's. And they did say it was just a dream."

The curious feeling still remained in Doctor Jasper's mind, but with added strength and clearer surmising, as he listened silently to all this; and a graver and more troubled look grew in the gray eyes that again gazed out seaward over the small head lying against his broad chest.

But a more startling turn was now given to his thoughts; for the child raised himself to his knees, as he said with still greater and increasing excitement, "Afterwards I did wake up, crying and screaming, for I did think the man had come for me again. And oh, *mon Docteur*," and he held him with frantic little hands, "I had 'most forgotten it all, for I did not dream for so long; but that man I did see you looking at is like the man who did take me away from Loleta. And don't, — don't let him get me again, will you?"

The words ended in a broken sob, muffled by the protecting folds of Doctor Jasper's coat.

He said nothing, but hugging Captain Jack still closer, pondered over what he had heard.

Was it, as the child had been led to believe, merely a dream of his baby days, brought into vivid recollection by what his active brain (aided by an exceedingly acute nervous organization) had conjured into a likeness between the dead stranger and this other man, for whom he had all the terror he would have felt toward an actual abductor?

Was this all there was to it; or had the events of the past hour recalled to the lad's mind a real experience, — an event in which the suicide had been an actor; and was it the suddenly awakened remembrance of this which had brought him into such a condition of nervousness and fear?

These were the questions that flashed through Doctor Jasper's mind. But he did not undertake to answer them at present; for, putting aside all other thoughts, he set himself to the task of quieting the now almost hysterical child.

"Why now, Captain Jack," he said gently, "don't you know that all this was only a dream? Your sister and Zabette both tell you so; and surely you are not such a baby as to be frightened by dreams, and cry about them."

"But this is not like other dreams," the child persisted, still shivering; and the Doctor, in his own mind, could not but agree with him.

But he only said, "Now, see here, my little boy, that man you saw can hurt no one. He can never speak again, nor move, for he is dead. You know what it is to be dead, don't you, — to shut your eyes, and go to sleep, and wake up in another world?"

"Yes, I know." Captain Jack lifted his head once more, and bent it back, the better to look into the Doctor's eyes. "And is he truly dead, and can't he ever walk any more?"

"No, my dear, — never again."

"Then of course he can't touch me, can he, *mon Docteur?* But," with a sigh, "he does frighten me

so! Do you s'pose it is very wicked that I do feel not sorry because he is dead?"

Doctor Jasper did not answer the question, but gave the child a hug, and kissed the anxious little face.

"Come now," he said, "you must not think any more about that dream. Let us go and find Mammy Zabette; and then I will walk home with you."

"Oh, will you?"

The boy was now smiling. And, as the two arose, a small brown hand was slipped into that of the Doctor, the sensitive fingers lying like the soft touch of rose leaves in the broad palm that clasped them.

Mammy Zabette was soon found, and the three set out for Madame Harwood's house. Captain Jack held tight to Doctor Jasper's hand, swinging it back and forth, as they walked along side by side, while the old negress kept behind, although preserving all her majesty of bearing, and looking, with her jetty skin and gayly turbaned head, like a wayward bit of the tropics, curiously out of place in this little spot by the northern sea.

A few stars were out when they reached the gate; and here the Doctor paused, not quite determined to go no farther, and yet not feeling like risking a snubbing from Madame Harwood.

While he stood hesitating, Captain Jack whispered eagerly, "Put down your ear." He did so, and felt how much too warm was the little face that touched his cheek.

"You will never say anything of the dream I did tell you?"

The words were full of entreaty. And Doctor Jasper kissed the child, while he answered, "Never," as solemnly as he would have given his word to another man.

As he raised his head he caught the distant glimmer of something white in the shrubbery. Captain Jack saw it as well, and exclaiming joyously, "I do see my Loleta!" he dashed up the walk and into the bushes where the white dress had disappeared.

The Doctor now turned to Mammy Zabette, who had reached the gate, and told her briefly of what had happened, urging her to see that Captain Jack was kept away from the wharf for several days, as the fright he had experienced was very great, and a repetition might be dangerous.

"I goin' t' see misef dat" — hesitatingly — "wat I yeh dey talk 'bout," she replied in her queer guttural tones. "Eh-h-h! W'at 'll Madame say? W'at kin I tell? Aie — aie!"

"Well, there is this about it," he said, cutting short her lamentations, which seemed to him rather more demonstrative than the circumstances warranted, unless what he had heard from Captain Jack was something more than the story of a dream: "You had better be sure that the boy does n't look at the dead man again."

He had decided not to go in, and so went back to his lodgings, wondering what he ought to do, if indeed anything. And, in the end, he concluded to follow the wise man's advice, that, "Not knowing what to do, do nothing."

CHAPTER XX

THE next morning, shortly after breakfast, Mrs. Bessly informed Doctor Jasper that Mammy Zabette was at the door, and wished to speak with him.

He went out; and there in the sunshine stood the negress, looking more black and solemn than ever, as she gravely bowed, in response to his "Good-morning, Zabette; what can I do for you?"

"Pleasy, sah, *Docteur*," she began, "de *bébé* sort o' talk 'bout wan'in' t' see ye, mos' all night; an' Madam say, pleasy woan' ye call. De *bébé* seem nair well, an' no sleep much."

She stopped; but before he could ask for more details in regard to Captain Jack, she spoke again, now glancing nervously about.

"An', *Docteur*, fo' I goes home, pleasy kin I see dat drownded man? De *bébé*, — he will talk so much 'bout eem; an' I yeh de talk 'bout eem yist'day, an' I bin done wan'in' t' see eem."

Her manner, rather than the request itself, started a curious train of thought in the Doctor's mind; but he was careful that none of this should be reflected in his face.

He looked out toward the sea for a moment or two, to avoid the searching eyes he was conscious that Zabette had bent upon his face. Then, taking

his hat from the hall table, he said, "Very well; come with me. But I must first see if I can get the key from Uncle Billy."

He found the old man busy about the wharf, and, without giving any reason for the request, asked for the key.

It was soon forthcoming; and Doctor Jasper, followed by Zabette, proceeded to the door of the building wherein the dead man lay.

"We 're 'lowin' ter bury him this arternoon, Doctor Jarsper," Uncle Billy called after him; "thet is, if ye think it 'll be doin' ther squar' thing."

To this the Doctor only responded by a nod of assent as he opened the door.

He kept close to Zabette, and going directly to the pile of canvas, uncovered the body, turning quickly as he did so, that he might observe her face when she looked upon the lifeless features.

He had his own reasons for this; and he was now satisfied of their being good ones, and that his suspicions were not without foundation.

Zabette's eyes no sooner fell upon the silent face than they dilated wildly. Then, giving utterance to a sharp cry, she threw her apron over her turbaned head, while her voice came in disjointed ejaculations from its folds.

An old sailor who had followed them unnoticed, stood staring, open-mouthed, through the doorway. But he saw nothing unusual; for Doctor Jasper, after telling Zabette that there was little sense in her looking at the body, if it had such an effect upon her, led her from the shed, and far enough away to

be out of the man's hearing, first, however, requesting him to lock the door, and take the key to Uncle Billy.

Turning to the negress, he now said with sudden earnestness, "No one in town has been able to identify that man; and this, if possible, should be done before he is buried. Do you know who he is, or anything about him?"

She would not meet his eyes, but glanced uneasily toward the shed, as she stammered, "Me, — me know eem, — me?" And, groaning again, she once more covered her head.

"Stop that, if you please," the Doctor said sternly, as he pulled the apron from her face. "You must tell me, if you can, who this man is. I want to know if you ever saw him before?"

The woman's eyes were staring with fright; yet back of it was an unmistakable intelligence. At first she gurgled and gasped hysterically. But, after a few seconds of this, she evidently gained control over herself, for her face settled into sullen gloom, as she twisted her strong black fingers in her snowy apron, and said, looking away from Doctor Jasper's searching eyes, "I neeva' been meet eem; on'y he got de face lak — " She stopped and shuddered.

"Yes," the Doctor asked impatiently; "like who, or what?"

"Lak nair one!"

Her voice was now steadier than his own; and the words came out defiantly, while her great dusky eyes looked him squarely in the face.

"Lak nair one," she repeated. "It's on'y dat et 's

nair a chahmin' face." Then, glancing again at the shed, "I doan' wan' look no mo', but mus' go, for Madame be wan'in' me. Will I tell her *le Docteur* 'll come?"

He pulled his hat down over his nose, and regarded her with moody eyes. He was quite sure that she had been lying to him; and he was equally certain that it would be useless to accuse her of falsehood, or attempt to obtain any farther information from her. So he simply bade her tell Madame Harwood that he would come up at once to see Captain Jack.

A few minutes later, while crossing the street, he met Uncle Billy, who stopped him to ask, "It 'll be all right, Doctor Jarsper, don't ye think, if we read ther sarvices over thet poor chap durin' ther day?"

"I think, Uncle Billy," was the reply, "that I 'd wait until evening; but no longer, on any account. That will give every one a chance to see him; and perhaps there will be somebody to recognize him. But of course you know the whole matter is in the hands of the Medical Examiner, and that he is the one to say when the poor fellow shall be buried."

"Yes, I know all 'bout thet," said the old man. "But ye see he ain't o' much 'count, an' 'll do jest as we say 'bout it. As ter more people seein' him, I guess ev'rybody *hev* seen him by this time; an' they all pipe ther same tune — 'never clapped eyes on him afore.' Was he crazy, d' ye think, Doctor Jarsper?"

"Most men are crazy who do such a thing as that, Uncle Billy."

The Doctor spoke in a general way, and rather abstractedly; for his thoughts, as well as his eyes, were fixed upon Mammy Zabette, who was just disappearing around the corner.

"I guess ye 're 'bout right as ter thet, Doctor; for they must surely be crazy, ter go poppin' their craft inter a harbor there 's never no gittin' out of, an' never waitin' ter be axed by Providence, thet hev charge o' thet harbor, which, as ye know, be one thet never gives a sign till yer berth 's all snug an' ready for ther lyin' in dock. He must hev been clean daft ter do sech a thing; an' he so young an' han'some, poor chap!"

The old sailor rolled away, sighing and grumbling.

As Doctor Jasper entered the Harwood house, directly opposite him was the doorway of the conservatory, through which he could see the palms, and the lemon and orange trees, reaching almost to the glass roof. Amongst them were gleams of many colored flowers; and a jet of sparkling water, spouting from the shell in a marble Cupid's dimpled hands, flung a silvery spray high into the odorous air.

When Pierre, the butler, closed the front door, the hall became dusky, while all the light seemed to be concentrated beyond, in the conservatory, with the palm and orange trees. And from out of this light Doctor Jasper saw Loleta coming slowly to meet him.

Her eyes were so solemn, and her face so pale and smileless, that he was startled. Yet, lover-like, as to the smallest detail of her appearance, he noticed how the hair was massed about her head, and caught by a carved shell comb, whose contrast

set rich shades playing in its tawny waves, and how the same wonderful hair broke into short curls over her brows and around her little ears, and how her neck, round and tender as a child's, gleamed like snow from the pale blue of her gown.

She gave him her hand in an oddly mechanical sort of way, never removing her eyes from his face, and with no trace of a smile showing, as she said, "Will you come first into the 'den,' where grandmère does wait to see you?"

He bowed silently, wondering with a queer dread in his heart what could have happened to make her look and act as she did; and she, speaking no other word, led the way to the so-called "den," and there left him.

Madame Harwood received him most graciously. She chatted gayly, and smiled a great deal; but he felt that the gayety was forced, while the smiles seemed only to make her more incomprehensible, as she sat there with head erect, imperious as ever.

There was a creamy cactus fastened in her dark gown; and as she talked, her white jewelled fingers toyed with it until the stem broke, and it fell into her lap. She did not appear to notice this; and when, as she rose to take Doctor Jasper upstairs, the blossom fell to the floor, she trod upon it.

He saw the act; and, trifling as it was in itself, he could not help comparing Loleta's life to this flower. And he queried as to whether her grandmother was not — perhaps unthinkingly — toying with it, and might not possibly crush it.

While they were talking, he had endeavored to lead

the conversation to bear upon the suicide, hoping to find some clue — though what, he even yet could not have explained. But still he had the feeling (and Zabette's emotion had strengthened it) that Madame and some of her household might, if they would, furnish information as to his identity.

But all his attempts were parried in a way so graceful, and yet so firm, — with such perfect calmness and finesse, that he was forced to abandon the effort, and retire from the field unsatisfied, — utterly defeated.

When at length she had led the way up the great oaken staircase, she paused before a closed door on the floor above, and begged him in a low voice to be sure and not permit the child to speak of what seemed to have made him ill. Then, after tapping gently, she opened the door, and ushered him into a large room, where, upon a lounge, amidst a pile of brightly-hued stuffs, lay little Captain Jack.

The small monkey was perched beside the child, gazing gravely into his face, which was turned toward Loleta, whose hand he clasped, as she sat by him, reading aloud.

Long after this did Doctor Jasper's memory retain the modulations of that low, sweet voice. And her face came to him again and again, looking as it did then, so sadly wistful.

The monkey, catching sight of a stranger, fled, chattering noisily; and Captain Jack, looking up, smiled brightly, stretching out his arms to put them about the Doctor's neck, as his big friend bent over him.

"My Topaz does n't know you as well as I do, *mon Docteur*," he said lovingly, "or he would n't run away. I am so glad you did come. Here, Topaz, come and see *mon Docteur*."

But the monkey only chattered all the livelier, as he skipped across the room to seek refuge in the ample skirts of Mammy Zabette, who sat by an open window, busy with her needle, and appearing to pay no heed to what was going on. Her lids were downcast, and she seemed intent upon her work; but now and again her deep-set black eyes encountered Doctor Jasper's in a quick glance that told him she was on guard.

CHAPTER XXI

MADAME HARWOOD had closed the door when Doctor Jasper entered the room; but she shut herself on the outer side, and he did not see her again. And as he seated himself near Captain Jack, Loleta moved away, as if not caring to take part in their conversation.

All this was not unnoticed by him; and feeling piqued at the girl's manner and act, he devoted his entire attention to the child.

In a moment, however, he was diverted by an exclamation from Mammy Zabette.

"Shoo, shoo, ye drefful little beastie," she was saying in a suppressed voice, as she shook her skirts free from the nestling monkey.

"Don't you like monkeys, Zabette?" he asked, pleasantly enough, willing to propitiate her.

"Me?" she said, seeming surprised that he should speak to her. "No, sah; doan' lak no monkeys. I bleeb dey's all trick niggahs once, an' got voodooed."

"Mammy Zabette!" Loleta spoke sharply, with a note of warning in her voice; and she glanced significantly toward Captain Jack.

The negress shot a startled look at the listening child, and muttered, "Mah tongue, — it do git too wagglety, fo' sho'."

And so it appeared; for the lad fixed his bright eyes upon her face as he exclaimed, "Voodooed! That 's what you did say old Zeke was, away off in that other place, where I did dream. You said that Zeke was voodoo, 'cause he did have a big bird. A pelican, I think it must have been; for in grand-mère's book I did see a picture of a pelican, and it did look like the bird I remember Zeke had. And he did have, oh, such heaps of black cats and kittens. And I did hear you say he was voodoo."

"Jacques, dear, — don't," Loleta said earnestly, as she came and leaned over him, so that Doctor Jasper could not see her face.

And Mammy Zabette murmured, "Eh-h-h, — aie! De brains ob dat *bêbê!* Who 'd bleebed it?"

"You know you promised not to talk about such things," Loleta went on, while she trailed her fingers gently over the boy's face. "You must forget all about your dreams, for they only make you ill; and so you must only talk to *le Docteur*, who came all the way up here this morning to see you. You must let him see if you will need some medicine, as grand-mère did say. And perhaps, if he has the time, he will tell you a story."

She had turned toward the Doctor; and her face bore the first approach to a smile he had seen there.

Here came a knock at the door, which Mammy Zabette opened quickly, and growled something in an undertone to whoever was outside.

Then a high-pitched voice answered, "Missus tol' me I wa' cum up hyar fo' t' say t' Miss Loleta dat she want speak wid her d'rec'ly."

"I will come, Riar," her young mistress said. And, with a hurried apology to Doctor Jasper, she crossed over to the door, which Zabette still held open, disclosing a slim little mulatto girl of ten or so, who peered inquisitively into the room.

Loleta paused on the sill and asked, "Do you think he does need any medicine, Doctor Jasper?"

"Well," he replied, merely glancing at her, and then turning his eyes back to his small patient, "perhaps a little quieting powder, and something in the way of a tonic, later on. You see" — looking at her again — "it's mostly a matter of the nerves. The child's organization is very acute and sensitive — wonderfully so; and it has been a good deal shaken up. But I think we 'll manage to bring him out in proper shape again, — eh, my boy?" And he once more withdrew his eyes from Loleta's face, to look into that of Captain Jack.

"Now, you Riar, g' 'long! Fin' yo' bis'ness 'g'in; an' hit ain't up hyar nowhar," said Zabette to the staring yellow girl. Then she closed the door, and returned to her seat by the window, where she took up her sewing, and now permitted the monkey to cuddle in her skirts.

It was not very long before Captain Jack was talking and acting in much his usual fashion; and the Doctor, who had been exerting himself to keep the child's active mind properly occupied, was greatly relieved to see the lovely eyes grow less unnaturally bright, and a healthier color come to the cheeks and lips. He taxed his memory and imagination for anecdotes calculated to prevent him from thinking

of yesterday's fearful sight; and so well did he succeed, that at last, when he arose to go, Captain Jack's condition was almost normal, and he held on to his friend, begging him to come again, and very soon.

"Well, yes — perhaps," the Doctor said, smiling down into the winsome little face. "And if I don't, then Mammy Zabette must bring you down to see me. I have n't any monkey to show you, like Topaz; nor any goldfish, nor birds. But I have some other things I am sure you 'd like to look at."

"Have you, — what are they?" was the eager question.

"I 've a big magnifying glass, for one thing; and I 'll rig it up, so that you can look through it. Did you ever see the teeth of a bee, or the feathers on a moth?"

"Why, no, *mon Docteur*." And the child's eyes were wide with wonder. "Do they really have such things? And is it that bees do bite with their teeth, when we think it is that they do sting?"

The Doctor smiled again. "You shall take a look through the glass, and see for yourself, in a day or two, if you 'll be a good boy, and take the medicine I 've told Zabette about giving you."

Then, with an embrace and kiss, he bade the little fellow good-by.

Mammy Zabette went down to let him out; and as he stepped upon the veranda he turned around and scrutinized her face searchingly as he said, "Mind that you don't let Jacques out of the house until after to-morrow, for fear he might come down to the wharf. And don't forget that powder to-night, as it

will make him sleep as he ought. And, above all things, don't let him hear you talk about that dead man."

"'Deed an' 'deed, I talks ter eem 'bout nuthin' ob de sort," she replied sharply, her eyes flashing resentment at his imputing to her such a lack of discretion.

Doctor Jasper went that same afternoon with Captain Leslie, to take a final look at the suicide, and found two sailors, under Uncle Billy's supervision, engaged in sewing the body in a piece of canvas, preparatory to placing it in the rude coffin lying near. The necessary authority had been given; and it was left with Uncle Billy to see that the unknown dead should be properly interred.

"First we puts him inter his canvas jacket, sea-fashion, an' then inter his wooden overcoat, land-fashion," the old man said grimly. "An' ter-night he goes underground, poor lad, or inter ther town vault."

"And no one knows who he is, where he came from, nor anything at all about him," Captain Leslie added musingly, as he looked away from the mummy-like bundle, and out through the shed.

"Nary," was Uncle Billy's terse affirmation.

"It seems very strange to me," the Captain continued, — "the man coming to this place, where he is entirely unknown, and then killing himself."

"Don't it now?" Uncle Billy again agreed. "But so be 't; an' I reckon he 'll sleep jest as sound, arter all. Queer taste he hed, though, at his age, ter be in sech a hurry ter find his way inter Davy Jones's locker."

Doctor Jasper and the Captain did not remain long, but went out, leaving Uncle Billy and the other men to finish their task.

The Doctor was wishing that he could follow his impulse, and unburden his mind to Captain Leslie, —tell him what he knew and thought about this mysterious affair. But he reminded himself of how he became possessed of such facts as had reached him, and that his lips were sealed by his promise to Captain Jack. Then, taking everything into account, there was vastly more to think, than to know, about the matter; and he had no right to put suspicions and conclusions into words.

So he kept his own counsel, although the doing of it made him feel uncomfortable.

He took tea and spent the evening at the Leslie house. And next day he went with the Captain to Pilot's-Head, behind the same horse, and feeling the same lack of confidence in his friend's equine accomplishments that Margaret had shown.

That evening at the tea-table he was treated to a lengthy dissertation from Mrs. Bessly in regard to the stranger's suicide.

"An' one must forever wonder," was her conclusion, "what med him do sech a thing; an' he *thet* young an' han'some, an' not one livin' soul to say they knew him. They put him in the town vault, ye know, last night, so Mary-Alice told me. She an' Miss Philips happened to be comin' through the buryin' ground, an' they stopped a minute to speak to old Ayres; an' they was jest puttin' his coffin into the box. An' the sight of it, an' thinkin' 'bout it, med her

thet sick. I s'pose we 'll never know the rights o' the case."

When tea was over Doctor Jasper went out, and, crossing the street, stood a while on the wharf, looking off to where the sea lay motionless.

The tide was full, lapping the wharf steps, and jostling the small boats at their moorings; and where several dories chanced to be together, they sidled up against one another, as if having a secret conference.

After leaving the wharf, he wandered on, and up to the top of one of the headlands, where he threw himself down upon the dry grass, whose feathery heads were nodding in the wind.

Westward, the sky was still flushed with rose and gold, and the rays from the lighthouse twinkled uncertainly in the yellow air. But, later on, as the sunset faded into gray, they came out sharply bright.

And still Doctor Jasper sat there, his head between his palms, looking with wide, unseeing eyes, out upon the water, until the gray of the twilight was gone, the darkness had fallen, and the stars were out. The lighthouse lamp shone like one of them, making a broad path of golden brightness across the black water at his feet.

"Loleta — Loleta!" the sea seemed to say to him as it lapped the rocks; and the wind that the night was bringing from the water whispered in his ears, "Loleta!"

CHAPTER XXII

A FEW mornings after this Mrs. Bessly brought Doctor Jasper a note, holding it gingerly between her forefinger and thumb, covered by the folds of her gingham apron.

"Ye see I did n't want to speck it, Doctor Jasper; an' ye must excuse my looks. Jane 's gone down to the store to see 'bout some butter, an' I was jest a-scrubbin' the dryin'-room floor, when the nigger boy from Madam's brought this. He says he 's to wait for an answer."

Doctor Jasper's heart was beating hard and fast as he took the note and read it; but Mrs. Bessly's sharp eyes saw nothing unusual in his calm face and steady hands.

She stood waiting at the door until he looked up and said, "Don't stop, Mrs. Bessly. I will answer this, and bring it down myself, if you 'll kindly tell the messenger to wait."

It was from Loleta, saying that Uncle Billy wanted to take Jacques sailing with him that same afternoon, down to Echo Island, some five miles away, and that Madame Harwood wished her to ascertain if he was to be one of the party, as otherwise she did not deem it best to let the child go, although thinking the sail might do him good, as he was seemingly not yet quite as he should be. Then it went on to tell the

Doctor that he would have been asked to call again, before this, had it not been that Madame was indisposed, and in a way that made it impossible for them to see any one.

When he had finished reading the note, Doctor Jasper looked around in a curiously shamefaced fashion. Then, assured that Mrs. Bessly was gone, he quickly raised the paper and placed it against his lips.

After he had written his reply and delivered it to the waiting Louis, he went out to hunt up Uncle Billy, and arrange for going with him to Echo Island.

"I'm only too glad ter hev ye go, Doctor Jarsper," the old man declared heartily, looking up from the oarlock he was oiling.

The Doctor had found him on the beach below his bungalow, with his cats around him, — all except the Queen of Sheba, who sat perched with much majesty upon an inverted bucket near by.

"Ye see," Uncle Billy added in explanation, "I told Madam thet me an' young Sam was goin' out jest for pleasurin'. An' so we was; but more ter get Cap'n Jack on ther water 'n anythin' else. Sam told me ther young monkey 'd been sick, an' so yest'day I went up ter see how he was. An' — land love ye, Doctor Jarsper, but how glad ther youngster seemed ter be ter see me! He wanted, fust thing, ter know when I was goin' out sailin', an' 'minded me of a promise I 'd med ter tek him down ter Echo Island. So I jest laid out ter go this arternoon."

Then looking into the Doctor's face, he said inquiringly, "I wonder now if Miss Marg'ret 'd lek ter go?"

His shrewd eyes squinted in a way that made the Doctor smile, as he replied, "I happen to know, Uncle Billy, that Miss Margaret has other engagements for this afternoon, and that the Captain is away from home for the day."

This last bit of information caused the old sailor to chuckle.

"Laird, — but it 's funny ter see Cap'n Nat tekin' a turn at farmin', — goin' down ev'ry few days ter Pilot's-Head, ter look over his land, thet he thinks is calc'lated ter raise better cabbages an' taters on than his own garden here. Old Peter Cohen pertends ter be lookin' arter ther garden-truck on sheers; an' I 'll bet his own sheer 'll never be so small as Cap'n Nat's. But, bless ye, 't would n't be no airthly use ter tell Cap'n Nat so. 'Live an' let live,' says he. An' so it be for all as hev anythin' in common with Cap'n Nat Leslie, be it gardens ashore, or grub 'board ship."

"By the way, Uncle Billy," said the Doctor, who was thinking of other things than Captain Leslie's vegetables, "you must be very careful not to say anything about that fellow who killed himself, — I mean when Captain Jack is with us. And you had better warn Sam, in case I don't have a chance to do it."

"No call ter tell him, or me neither, 'bout thet, Doctor Jarsper. Ther old nigger woman up ter ther house swooped down on Sam as he stood by ther gate axin' one o' them little nigs 'bout Cap'n Jack. An' she done thet same thing ter me, when I went up ter sit 'long with ther lad under ther trees

for a spell. Laird, Laird," and his face took an expression of mingled amusement and disgust, "I don't see how them folks can stand sech an everlastin' lot o' niggers 'round 'em all ther time."

After a while he asked Doctor Jasper to come up to the bungalow. The invitation was readily accepted ; and it was not long before the two were sitting near the open doorway, smoking, while they sipped some cooling beverages of the old sailor's making. It was a rarely perfect day, and the dancing sunshine seemed to lie like happy laughter upon land and sea.

"Goin' ter be a serperlative arternoon for a sail," Uncle Billy remarked, between the whiffs of his pipe.

Doctor Jasper assented, while he rubbed Aaron's head and ears, that feline having made himself comfortable in the lap which he recognized as that of a friend.

"Did ye ever hev any relations here'bouts, Doctor Jarsper?" the old man inquired presently.

"Not so far as I know. In fact I never heard of any of my people being in this part of the country. Why?"

"Wa'l, there was some Jarspers used ter live 'round here, back in ther sixties. There was old Reuben Jarsper an' his twin brother Richard; an' I tell ye they was a queer pair. They set great store by one 'nother, them two did; an' when Reuben died, Richard would n't let nobody else tech him, but jest went ter work an' laid him out hisself. An' he put him inter his Sunday-best coat, which was a blue

one, with brass buttons, an' with tails long 'nough for an admiral's pennant. Ther tails o' thet coat hed been Reuben's pride, ye see, an' Richard med up his mind they should show for all they was wuth. So he cut 'em off'n behind, an' sewed 'em on in front, where all hands could tek 'em in durin' ther buryin' sarvices. An' Becky Sanderson (she was own sister ter 'Currant Jelly's' gran'dad) she said thet when Gabriel come ter pipe all hands aloft he would n't know which branch o' ther sarvice Reuben b'longed ter; for from ther front, it might be ther army, but lookin' at him from ther back, it 'd surely be ther navy."

The Doctor's laughter caused Aaron to hastily vacate his lap and betake himself a little distance away, where he stood gently lashing his sleek flanks with his long tail, while he looked dreamily out to sea, as though greatly bored by the frivolous talk and conduct of men.

The afternoon was, as to wind and weather, all that the morning had promised; and the two o'clock sun saw the "Pretty Sally" well under way for Echo Island.

Doctor Jasper was sitting aft, his arm encircling Captain Jack; and, while not appearing to do so, he was watching the child with keen attention.

Uncle Billy also cast many a furtive glance at his idol; but neither of the men made any allusion to the pale little face or the dark-circled eyes. And Sam Ayres seemed too busy managing the craft to let his attention be diverted by any indulgence more serious than whistling.

"What do you think, Uncle Billy, the bottom of the sea is like?" inquired Captain Jack, looking down into the water.

"What do I think, my poppet?" the old sailor replied, his loving eyes bent upon the pale, winsome face. "Why, bless yer young heart, I *knows* what it is lek, hevin' been told by them as hev been down ter see for theirselves, in clothes med o' purpose ter keep out ther water, an' with a rubber pipe thet went out'n their mouth, up aloft, 'bove ther water, so they could be breathin' land air all ther time."

"For true?" the child exclaimed, his sweet voice filled with wonder.

"Aye, — true as preachin'. An' ther bottom o' ther ocean's a reg'lar garding o' bu-tee, full o' 'mazin' fine things. There be trees sproutin', an' flowers, lek none ye see on land, an' as big as wagon wheels. An' there be weg't'bles growin' there most wonderful ter see; an' things all lace-lek, o' ther color o' dyin' dolphins, a-shinin' an' wavin' 'round, all sparklin' an' blazin'. None o' ther bottom kin be seen most times, for ther flowers, an' trees, an' weg't'bles, an' shells."

Doctor Jasper knew that Uncle Billy was not much addicted to story-reading. And yet he now queried to himself if the old man had not been taking his cue from some of Jules Verne's wonderful romances.

But he said nothing, and kept his eyes fixed upon Captain Jack, who turned his face to him as Uncle Billy stopped to take breath, and also to light his pipe, which had gone out while he was talking.

"I do think that it is there where mermaids and water-babies do live. Don't you, *mon Docteur?*" And he snuggled himself still closer into the stalwart arm that was around him so firmly.

But Uncle Billy was not to be balked, for he felt himself entitled to the floor. And so he, by virtue of his superior knowledge of all matters relating to the sea, proceeded to answer the child's question.

"I never heerd tell o' nuthin' livin' there, 'cept fishes, Cap'n Jack. But, as I say, it 's as bee-u-tiful as ther Garden of Eden; an' with nary a merman, or mermaid, either, ter play Adam an' Eve, an' with nary a Sarpint."

Here young Sam struck in. "Seems t' me it 's wuth while ter be drownded, if it 's lek thet down there."

Doctor Jasper glanced at him warningly. And Uncle Billy turned to him with a savage scowl as he said, "Davy Jones 's got more cabins an' bunks 'n one, my lad; an' some of 'em 's far from bein' so pleasure-givin'. An' I think ther worst o' ther hull lot is resarved for sech young fellers as talks too much, an' slops all over theirselves."

"Oh, — aye," Sam replied vaguely, flushing to the back of his ears as he realized what an unhappy slip he had made.

Uncle Billy had meantime been replenishing his pipe. And now he said, with the evident purpose of putting the talk upon a new course, "Say, Doctor Jarsper, what d' ye think o' the new-fangled way o' singin' — 'chantin',' I think they calls it thet 's gittin' inter so many o' ther churches now days?

Leastwise 't was new ter me, when I was in ther city one time over Sunday, an' drifted inter one o' ther fine churches there."

"I 'm not sure that I understand you, Uncle Billy," answered the Doctor, wishing to draw the old man out. "What was it like?"

"Like? Wa'l, — not meanin' no harm, 't was ter my ears lek ther bloomin'est, crazy, all-fired screechin' o' cats, an' beatin' o' tomtoms. Ye see 't was this here way: Ther leddies an' lads, they all stood up where ther organ was; an' they let go first. An' then ther organ took a hand at thumpin'. Then they all screeched ag'in; an' ther organ, it thumped ag'in. It were sort o' lek this, — 'Glory be,' — bump, bump, bump, 'ter ther Father,' — bump, bang, an' so on, till it come ter ther endin', — 'Amen!' An' then it seemed a puzzler as ter whether ther screechin' 'Amen' or ther bang-whang o' ther organ 'd git there loudest."

His voice had been growing husky, causing him to rub his throat two or three times, as if it needed lubricating. And as he was finishing his musical critique he gradually edged along toward the cuddy, so timing himself that as the final words came from his dry lips, his head and shoulders were just inside the little door. Then, seeming to remember the obligations of hospitality, he turned around to ask hoarsely, "Won't ye hev suthin', Doctor Jarsper?"

The Doctor smiled as he shook his head, and the old man turned away again. And there soon followed convulsive movements of his arms, shoulders,

and head, such as to show that his own views were not in accord with those of his guest.

The latter had sometime since drawn Captain Jack into his lap, where he half sat, half lay, his head resting against the Doctor's broad shoulder.

There the child remained until they reached Echo Island, when he had become so much like his former self as to announce in a very lively manner that he was hungry.

The anchor was thrown out, and the little party went ashore in the dory, taking with them some cod-fish Uncle Billy had caught during the trip. There was also an iron pot and a basket of vegetables, — all being with reference to the proposed chowder.

They had a jolly afternoon of it, Sam playing "mumble-the-peg" with Captain Jack, who actually induced Uncle Billy and Doctor Jasper to join in that exciting game. And the child laughed in a way that did them all good when the dignified Doctor was compelled to lie down with his face to the ground and draw the peg with his strong white teeth, getting his moustache generously filled with the moist earth. The sun's rays were well aslant when they made sail for home; and the Doctor congratulated himself as he saw how much better was the child's color, and that the circles were almost gone from beneath his eyes.

As they entered the harbor, the sun had gone below the hills back of the town, and a faint flushing of pink was telling of an ended day.

Captain Jack was very quiet, lying close up against the Doctor. But presently he roused himself to hear what Uncle Billy was saying to young Sam.

"She were never much of a craft at best. An' ther sun hed fried 'bout all ther pitch out'n her seams, till she leaked lek ther old sieve thet she was. An' ther cap'n, — Laird! He were a lunatic, for temper. I 've knowed him ter em'ty a six-shooter down ther deck, jest ter sort o' mek a peaceful atmosphere aboard. Durin' one scrap o' ther sort he went an' drilled a hole through ther mate, by mistek. An' 't was quite frequent thet he scooted arter ther cook an' ther cabin boy, chasin' 'em with a handspike. Onct he — Ump!" Uncle Billy interrupted himself to exclaim, "I 'm blowed if there ain't thet old mountain o' tar!" He was looking hard at the wharf, where, sure enough, stood Mammy Zabette, her gay turban making a brilliant spot upon the dusking background.

The sea was sunless and darkening, only the fields ashore holding a last semblance of brightness, when the "Pretty Sally" came alongside the wharf, and Doctor Jasper, swinging Captain Jack ahead of him, stepped off.

CHAPTER XXIII

SEATED upon a pile of lumber near the top of the steps was Mrs. Bessly, her white apron over her head, for the air had a touch of chilliness compared with the temperature of her kitchen, where she usually was busy at this hour. And the fact of her being where she was, together with her unwontedly solemn face, signified that something was very much amiss.

Near her stood Zabette, looking, as Doctor Jasper thought, even gloomier than usual.

The negress spoke up at once, addressing Captain Jack.

"Stay hyar wid Missey Bessly, honey, till I speaks wid *le Docteur* one minute." And before the child could remonstrate she had drawn the Doctor to one side, turning her back to the others as she said hastily, her voice filled with suppressed woe, "Madame, — we t'ink she done hab stroke, sair. She lay still — so still, all 'cept one han', dat jes' wave up an' down — up an' down. We doan' dar', at first, sen' fo' *le Docteur*. But now she so helpless, Miss Loleta, she say pleasy woan' ye come wid de chile an' me right 'way, an' see Madame."

"When did this happen?" he asked, almost before she had finished. "At what time was Madame taken in this way?"

"Mos' two hours 'go, w'en I was out'n de house, doin' arrans."

"And no one was with her but that girl?" he demanded, speaking with unconscious fierceness.

Zabette started, looking at him as if puzzled by his manner. But she ignored the question, and said still more urgently, "Woan' ye pleasy come right away, *Mo's'r le Docteur?*"

"Why, of course I will;" but he was still scowling at her. "I 'll come at once."

Mrs. Bessly now approached. "Ye be goin' up to Madam, be n't ye?" she inquired; but he did not seem to hear her.

Captain Jack, who had been looking on with wondering eyes, came and took hold of the Doctor's hand.

"Grandmère is ill," he said, his voice all of a tremble. "Mrs. Bessly does say so; and I do want to go to her. Take me home, please, *mon Docteur.* Mrs. Bessly says for me to stay with her; but I do want to go home."

The Doctor stooped to soothe him, while Zabette, rolling her hands in her apron, looked at the child with her eyes full of tears.

"An' yo' *is* comin' home, *mon bijou,* wiv' yo' Mammy Zabette," she said in a low, coaxing voice. "Right away yo' is comin'."

Still clasping the little hand tightly as they walked along, Doctor Jasper told him quietly that, as his grandmother was not very well, he should go with Zabette when they reached home, and not come to her room.

"I will be good, and stay away," the child promised, pressing the Doctor's hand as he swung it back and forth.

Mrs. Bessly stood a few moments where they had left her, in the middle of the street, looking after the three figures. Her kind heart was being torn between the impulse that was driving her to the Harwood house, to offer any assistance she could render, and the fear that she might not be wanted there. Then with this was the knowledge that her whole baking of bread and pies would be ruined, and go for nothing, if she left them to their fate.

"Plague take it," she muttered petulantly. "How contrary lots o' things do happen in this world! If I hed n't let Jane go over to Conley's for thet extra cotton, an' hed n't tried to be so smart myself, mekin' bread to-day, when I hed pies an' cake to bake, an' mekin' 'em all myself, too, I 'd been free to let my heels foller my wish, an' go straight up to Madam's this very minute. Dear me, — the days o' man is short, an' full o' sorrow an' sin; yes, an' so be wimmin's. An' there 's Madam at death's door, I guess; an' what 's to become o' them children, I wonder?"

She slammed her gate less noisily than usual, and went back to her baking.

At the Harwood gate, the fingers of the little hand that had been swinging Doctor Jasper's arm to and fro like a pendulum were suddenly closed tightly, as Captain Jack lifted his face, with troubled eyes and parted lips, to bid his friend good-by. Then, as Zabette took his other hand to lead him

away, he made a movement as if to resist, and clinging to the Doctor, burst out impulsively, "This day, before I did go, grandmère did take me in her lap and kiss me many times. She said I did look like the picture of grandpère Harwood, that was painted of him when he was a little boy; and she did ask if I would grow up brave and good, like him. And I told her 'Yes,' and that I would be good like she was, too. And then she did hug me up close, like Loleta does. And she did never do so before, — never once; and I did wonder why she did do it now. And I do think she was crying, for her cheek was wet, and it did make my forehead and one of my eyes wet."

"Never mind about it now, dear," the Doctor said gently, as he stooped to kiss the upturned face. "I will do all I can to make your grandmère feel well again; and you will always remember to be good and brave, as she said. And now if you 'll go with Mammy Zabette, I 'll come and see you after a while, and we can have a nice talk."

"Sure — for true?" His tone seemed to imply a slight doubt.

"Yes, surely; even if you have gone to bed."

This assurance seemed to dispel the child's saddened intuitions, for he went dancing gayly up the path with the grave-faced negress.

She had asked Doctor Jasper to wait a moment at the front door; and having called Pierre, she gave Captain Jack into his charge, and went with the Doctor upstairs.

The faint tinkle of the fountain in the conserva-

tory filled a silence that seemed gloomy with a coming tragedy as Doctor Jasper ascended the wide staircase, where the bronze triton's trident held the lamp, which gave forth a low, uncertain light, making dark shadows, like lurking phantoms.

Through a wide-opened window in the upper hall he saw the darkening sea, with several sails fading away to the eastward, the sight bringing to his mind one of Loleta's songs: —

> "Ships were sailing into the distance,
> Down to the lands where the sun has gone.
> The rough, fresh wind blew in our faces, —
> The shadows of night came slowly on."

Were not "The shadows of night," so woeful for her, poor child — were they not now gathering about her?

Mammy Zabette stopped before an open door, and motioned him to enter. The large room was lit by a few wax candles; and some of the windows were open, with their lace curtains caught back to let in the air.

As Doctor Jasper glanced quickly about, he was vaguely impressed with the brightness of the apartment, and with the luxury and taste of its furnishings.

But his eyes did not linger upon these, for he saw Loleta sitting in a cushioned recess, behind the looped-back curtain. Unconscious of his entrance, she was leaning forward, with her elbows resting upon the cushion of a carved, high-backed chair, and her hands clasped behind her head.

As he came toward her she looked up. Then,

without a word, she arose and went with him to the side of the bed where lay the unconscious woman.

Doctor Jasper said nothing, but looked intently at the dark, beautiful face upon the pillow, the black lashes throwing such heavy shadows that it was only when a stray beam of light stole under them that the eyes could be seen, glinting in a way to show that they were partially unclosed.

He made his examination rapidly, forced all the while to be mindful of the girl opposite, standing there motionless, her sorrowing eyes regarding him with the trustfulness of a child.

He took the small hand nearest him, its fingers weighted with sparkling rings, and felt for the pulse. This hand was nerveless and quiet; but its mate was reaching up, as if striving to get higher and still higher. When Loleta caught and held it, it became passive; but no sooner did she lay it upon the coverlid, than again it began to reach and reach, in a way pitiful to see.

The Doctor's diagnosis was soon completed. It told him that a blood vessel had burst in the brain; and he knew that Madame Harwood was dying. She was almost gone already; for her heavy breathing, and the motion of her hand, — these were purely mechanical.

He arose from his chair and went to an open window, whither Loleta followed him. Whether or not they were proffered, he never knew; but he found himself holding both her hands, while, and as gently as he could put it into words, he told her the truth.

She did not cry out, — did not even speak, but

only looked up into his face, her eyes wide-open and dazed, and still letting her hands lie within his.

Not until he had finished did she withdraw them, saying softly, "You are kind, — very, very kind," and then went back to the curtained recess where he first saw her.

His professional duty was now fulfilled, and he could do nothing more. But every feeling within him cried out in protest at the thought of leaving this girl alone with the old negress, to face and realize the dreadful end which must soon be forced upon her. As a man, and loving her, there was but one thing for him to do; and taking a note-book from his pocket he scribbled a few lines to Mrs. Bessly, telling her that she need not sit up to let him in, as he should stop where he was for the night, and asking her to come to the Harwood house early the next morning.

Then, mindful of his promise to Captain Jack, he asked Zabette to take him to the child.

She led him to another part of the house, where he found the boy in bed, but with eyes wide open; and, as the candle-light fell on his face, he sprang up eagerly.

"Ah, *mon Docteur*, — you did come!"

"Of course I came; did n't I promise you I would?" And, putting his hand in front of the light, he placed the candlestick upon the floor.

"I am so glad you did come; and — I do love you so," the child murmured, stroking the strong hand and wrist, as Doctor Jasper seated himself by the small brass bedstead.

"You are a dear little chap," he said, patting the tawny head; "and I love you as much as you love me. But I can't stay very long with you now, for I must go back to your grandmère."

Captain Jack looked up at him sharply.

"Why, — what is she doing?" he asked nervously.

"She is lying in bed," was the guarded reply.

"Oh, then," in a tone of relief, "she is asleep."

"Yes, she is asleep."

"And will she be all well when she does wake up?"

"Yes, I think she will, when she — wakes. But now I must go back to her. Good-night, my dear little man." And kissing the child, he left him to nestle down amid his pillows, while he himself returned to the sick room.

Zabette met him at the door, and told him that her young mistress begged he would go down to the dining-room, where Pierre had set out a repast for him.

The Doctor had not thought of it before, but now realized that he was very hungry; and the belief that Loleta had cared to think of his comfort would have incited an appetite, even had it been lacking.

One can be woefully in love, or woeful with sorrow, and yet know hunger. But Doctor Jasper's appetite would not have been so keen, had he known that it was the negress, and not her half-stunned young mistress, who had paid this attention to his welfare.

The night wore on slowly and drearily, with the tall clock in the lower hall telling the hours and

their divisions, as its silver chimes rang out like warning cries.

Except for the same pitiful movement of the arm and hand, Madame Harwood had not stirred; not an eyelash had quivered since Doctor Jasper entered the house. Only that one little hand, ever reaching, reaching, with a motion as unceasing and monotonous as the swing of the pendulum in the clock below.

Mammy Zabette sat beside the bed, fanning her dying mistress, never pausing, even when she nodded, overcome by drowsiness; and in the dusky light it was hard to distinguish where the line of her closed lids ended on the black cheeks.

Loleta, refusing to leave her grandmother for a moment, sat in a large cushioned chair, over in the darkest corner of the room, and might have been asleep, so motionless and quiet was she.

The night had been growing closer. The window in the curtained recess had been opened for air; and here Doctor Jasper sat, in a clumsily carved heirloom of a chair, — one that to an imaginative mind might have suggested the likelihood of an ancestor's ghost coming back to occupy it.

Through the open window came the sound of the sea, — the sea Madame Harwood had always loved so well, and over whose depths she had sailed so often by the side of her beloved one. And now that she lay drifting away from the shadows of earth, the mournful booming of the surf was a fitting requiem to lull her to eternal sleep.

So ran Doctor Jasper's thoughts, when a sudden

pause in the heavy breathing came like a shock to dissipate them, and brought him to the full possession of his senses.

A moment later and he was bending over the pillow. There came a long, soft, shuddering sigh, and then silence. Leaning still closer in the dim light, he saw that the lids were lifted from her eyes, and that the arm and hand lay motionless by her side; and he knew that all was over.

The muscles of the strangely beautiful face were already beginning to harden, and the great dark eyes had that unutterably sad look seen only in those of the dying, or the dead, — a look as if the discarded body were watching the spirit's flight into realms of light, such as it might never share.

Doctor Jasper closed the eyes tenderly, and looked up to see Loleta standing opposite, with clasped hands, and gazing with something like horror at the still form lying between them.

"It is all over, my child. She suffers no more, and is at peace." His voice and look, no less than his words, were as though he had laid his palm gently upon the head of a little child — one grieved, or hurt.

The girl made no answer, nor did she look at him. But, bending over, she rested her head beside the dark one on the pillow; and he heard her repeat, over and over again, "*Elle mouret, — elle mouret!* Grandmère — Grandmère, take me! Ah, take me, too!"

Aroused by this from her drowsiness, Zabette gave a wild cry, and dropped on her knees by the bed,

burying her face in the coverlid, while she gave voice to fiercely intense sobs.

Then Loleta started up, and, without a word, turned quickly and left the room.

As soon as she was gone Doctor Jasper spoke to the negress, who was continuing her lamentations, now in French, and now in broken English. Receiving no reply, he took her by the shoulders, bidding her to quiet herself, and go instantly to her young mistress.

She arose clumsily, her outburst somewhat subdued, although she was still sobbing; and bending over, she peered into the dead face. Then she drew the sheet over the rigid features as she muttered, "*Courri, — courri!* Eh-h-h! Gone, gone; an' yo' nevvah spik wid yo' poo' ol' Zabette, —nevvah no mo'. Yo' Zabette, she dress yo' fo' yo' bridal-day, an' now she dress yo' fo' yo' buryin'. Eh-h-h! Seems lak I mus' crazy die. Oh-h-h! *Ma mourri!*"

As the faithful creature, still sobbing and muttering, turned to go, the Doctor again bade her — but more gently than before — see to it that Miss Loleta had some sleep, and to let him know if she did not. He then told her to send one of the men-servants to him, and added that he should remain at the house until morning.

Zabette glanced toward the bed, and went slowly away. Pierre came soon afterwards; and to him Doctor Jasper gave some necessary directions.

Then, when he was alone, he went into the alcove, and drawing the curtains, shut himself in and sat by the window to wait for day to come.

He looked out over the gardens and fields, sloping away to the water, where they ended in a small cove, whose gray sand curved like a sickle. At either end great piles of rock loomed up like sentinels, upon whose scarred breasts the tides swayed thick growths of seaweed, while imagination could define their set lips, and their eyes — all unmindful of the toying water beneath them — gazing fixedly out to sea.

Just before dawn there came some vivid flashes of lightning, and a rush of wind that soughed dismally through the elms; then followed an impetuous patter of drops. And, after a short, angry downpour, the black clouds began to lift, and were soon rolled up and away into the south, where they hung like sable draperies.

And now, as though rejoicing in this majesty of a day's birth, a bird in the near-by meadow made the cooled air sweet with its morning song.

Ah, Nature, is there anything more heartless to a sorrowing soul than art thou?

Death lies cold and awful in its mystery. Hearts are breaking; the world seems to hold naught save darkness and despair.

And still the day comes, smiling and happy! The birds sing, and dawn's rose-flush over sea and land melts into gold, as the glorious sun brings another day to awaken the living, be they happy or sorrowful, — to awaken all but the dead for whom they mourn!

CHAPTER XXIV

"And thrice the twilight rose and fell
About a land where nothing seemed the same
At morn or eve, as in the days gone by."

DOCTOR JASPER had called twice at the Harwood house, to be told each time by Mammy Zabette that "Missy Loleta — she say woan' yo' pleasy 'scuse? An' dat doan' be nuffin' yo' kin do; an' *merci.*"

He saw nothing of Captain Jack; and the Leslies — father and daughter — had gone to the city for a visit of several days.

During this time of unusual loneliness many new thoughts had come to his mind, and all the old ones had returned, — amongst them the wonder about the strange suicide, and the indefinable feeling that connected him with the Harwood household.

His moody abstraction easily caught the attention of Mrs. Bessly, who confided to a neighbor her belief that Doctor Jasper, to judge from his altered appearance and manner, must surely be in love; and that of course it could be with none other than Margaret Leslie.

"He used to be *thet* sociable," she said to her friend, — "so ready to talk, seemin' pleased to hev me tell yarns o' the old place an' people, an' all

'bout the old times. An' now, — land-sakes! Ye might raise cummins right under his very nose, an' he 'd only look at ye as if he was goin' to drop off asleep."

One evening in the early twilight he rowed himself around to the cove where the Harwood estate ended at the water, and going within several yards of the beach, rested on his oars, while the tide gently set his boat shoreward.

The wind was from the land, and came with a warm rush, laden with the scent of newly-cut grass turning to hay on the upper meadows. And with it there was brought to his ears the sound of voices.

One of these made his pulse beat in the way it had learned of late; and he twisted his fingers in the seaweed upon the tall rocks alongside him, so that his dory should not drift farther inshore.

He heard Captain Jack say, "Please do sing for me." And then came that other voice, not quite so strong as when last he heard its singing, but sweeter than ever.

The words were enunciated so clearly that he could distinguish each one; and they poured into his heart a flood of pain and passion.

"I am as but a broken reed
Beside the rushing river;
And at my feet the waves flow on
Forever and forever.

"The purple clouds of evening red
Are mirrored in the river.
The sun will rise, and suns will set,
Forever and forever.

"Through moon and sunlight — spring and fall
Beside the rushing river,
I am as but a broken reed,
Forever and forever."

Such a heart-break sounded in her voice that he unconsciously stretched out his arms to her in the gathering dusk.

He started to row away, when a low murmur from Captain Jack came to him. Then he heard Loleta say, "Jacques, why should a *bébé* like you so love to hear that dismal song?"

The child answered, "'Cause I do like 'Forever and forever.'"

"Yes," she said; "but nothing is forever. Even the river does not really go on forever, although the song does say so. Suns will not always rise and set; nothing — nothing is forever."

She spoke as though not to the child, but in answer to some thought of her own. And Noel Jasper added to her words, "Only love! Love is, and ever was, and ever will be, the one thing eternal and forever!"

It was quite dark when he reached the wharf. And after delivering the dory to its owner, a lame old sailor, he crossed the street and found Eph and Jane hanging, lover-like, over the gate. As they greeted him, Mrs. Bessly came from the house.

"Be thet you, Doctor Jasper?" she asked, trying to make him out in the darkness. "Cap'n Leslie's jest been down here, lookin' for ye. Him an' Marg'ret got back an hour ago."

"Is that so? Then I guess I 'll go right over and see them."

He said this with such eagerness that daylight would have shown him the volumes spoken by Mrs. Bessly's lifted brows and puckered lips, — volumes from that never-ending library of "I told you so."

"Hi, lad, — is that you?" was the Captain's hearty greeting, its very sound bringing cheer to Doctor Jasper's thoughts.

He felt that it was the voice of a friend — one whom he could trust. And, as he grasped the cordially extended hand, he became possessed by a resolve to tell Captain Leslie the story of his longings and hopes.

This he did before long, when Margaret, who was feeling tired, had gone to her chamber for the night, and the two men sat alone in the comfortable room where they had smoked many a pipe and cigar together, and played innumerable games of chess and cribbage.

Before they had talked many minutes, Captain Leslie inquired about the Harwood children.

"They are both well; that is, so far as I can hear," Doctor Jasper replied, with assumed indifference.

"Hear!" the Captain repeated, with a touch of irascibility. "Why, man-alive, do you mean to tell me that you have n't been up there to see for yourself how they are?"

"I have been there twice; but Miss Loleta wished to be excused, so Zabette told me. And when I asked if I could be of any service, she answered that I could not."

"Hum-m-m," came from the Captain's lips, as he gently rubbed his chin, and looked at his friend through the clouds of fleecy smoke.

"Hum-m-m," he repeated, and paused, as though waiting for the Doctor to add something.

But it was several moments before the latter spoke. And when he did, it was with an earnestness which Captain Leslie thought was hardly called for by anything they had been discussing.

"Captain," he said, raising his eyes from the floor, and looking the other man in the face, "there is a certain matter I would like very much to talk with you about, if you don't mind; something that is very close to my heart, and in regard to which I should like your opinion."

Captain Leslie's genial face took an odd expression, and an unwonted shrewdness showed in his eyes, as he answered, "Pipe away, my lad, as I would say to my Tom, if he were here. Let me know what 's in the wind, and what I can do for you; and remember that you can count on Nat Leslie every time."

The Doctor thanked him warmly. Then, with a little hesitation, and a good deal of what the Captain would have called "shy-floundering," he put his friend in possession of his secret.

While he was doing this, another, and very different look, was growing upon Captain Leslie's face, — a look that might have told Doctor Jasper another secret, had he not been so taken up with his own.

Before long the Captain leaned forward, and rested

his face on his hand; and when the story was finished, he was silent for a while, sitting with his eyes partially covered by his palm, and his elbow upon the chair arm.

At length, after a long, deep sigh, he dropped his hand upon his knee, and gazed earnestly into Doctor Jasper's face. Then his own resumed much of its natural expression, and he smiled, while he said in his usual animated way, "See here, my lad, — the older I grow, the more I wonder at the chap, whoever he was, who first made a fat baby, with wings spliced to his shoulders, typify love, when a giant, or, better yet, a raging tornado, would be so much more to the point. It seems to me that, for most men, love is the proper thing for reaping and mowing, yes, and for ploughing under; and outside parties can rarely form any sort of a right idea as to the choice — who it is aimed at. And" — after a moment's pause — "so you 've got it, have you, my lad?"

He spoke as if it were an attack of fever, or some other more or less unpleasant and dangerous disease.

"Well, well," he added, before the Doctor could reply, and for a moment that same peculiar look returned to his face, "and so it is — Loleta?"

"Yes," — but the Doctor did not look at him — "it is Loleta."

"Then, my lad, all I 've to say is this: If Madame were alive, I should have my doubts as to your course being an easy one to sail. But, as matters are, it seems to me a perfectly clear one."

"Perhaps," — rather dubiously; "if she can care for me."

"Tut, tut," said the Captain, his voice now full of cheer and encouragement; "why do you sit and allow 'perhaps' to cut any figure in the matter? I know that old fellows like me are only too ready to put their gray heads into a bag of latter-day virtues, and pipe away to the tune of 'I never did so when *I* was young.' And that 's a tune I always try to shy clear of, — perhaps because it would be a hard one for me to sing. And yet I 'll be frank with you, my lad, and say that I don't think that, at your age, I 'd have done what you seem to be doing, but would have braced up, and shown more confidence. Remember this, — that a true woman's love is a rare thing to possess, and that it 's worth making a big fight to gain. Compared with a man's love, it 's solid silver alongside plated ware. You know that time and using never dull the real article; but they can rub the silver from the plated metal, and let the pinchbeck show through in ugly spots."

His manner had now become earnest; and he added, with a sudden accession of feeling, "Now, take my little Peg, — you 'd better believe that no man with electro-plated love had better come around *her*, — not while I am alive. She is pure silver, through and through. But the same is true of Jack Harwood's lass. And so I say to you, go to her like a man, and take nothing in the shape of 'No,' for an answer."

That night, Doctor Jasper, as was his habit before retiring, looked out at the sea and sky. His heart

was almost jubilant; and he said to himself, "I will see her, and then — "

There was a smear of moon only a little way up in the dark sky that melted down below it into the obscure sea-line; and here and there were glintings of stars.

The waters came rolling in with a sullen roar, for the coming tide was a high one. Its waves were washing over the spot where Loleta had been sitting that evening with Captain Jack; and before morning the spray, glancing from the full tide, would be blown across the pillars of the porch in front of the closed windows of the music-room.

Up over this were Loleta's apartments, the two windows of her bedroom looking out seaward, through the columns of the balcony. And here was swung a hammock, in which, until a late hour this same night, a woman's white draperies glimmered, pearl-like, in the gloom.

It was Loleta, there alone, the wind ruffling her loosened hair and the laces about her wrists and throat.

The room within was full of the rich daintiness with which her grandmother's tender love had surrounded her.

The walls were silvery green, with a frieze of white lilacs; and the rugs scattered over the polished dark wood floor were the same silvery green, with more white lilacs wrought upon them.

The bedstead and dressing-table — of some rare Arabian wood — were heavily carved and delicately scented. And upon the table wax candles were now

burning in silver girandoles whose many glass pendants sparkled like dewdrops caught in cobwebs.

One window opened, door-like, upon the balcony. In the other was an octagon seat, piled, like the divan at the opposite side of the room, with a riot of cushions, whose coverings were of curious foreign stuffs. And the chairs, carved from the same wood as the bedstead and dressing-table, were covered with silvery green, the predominating color of the room.

Amongst the pictures upon the walls was a painting of Captain Jack, in his third year, with a cherubic mouth and wealth of sunny curls, and with eyes in color like those clear streams in the woods that run out from amongst the roots of trees.

There was another portrait — of a low-browed beauty whose dusky loveliness and flashing black eyes were yet like Loleta. This was her young mother.

The candles had burned low before the girl came in from the balcony. She did not stop, but, closing the window, passed through the room into a darkened one beyond, where Captain Jack lay asleep. And the door she left open caused a draught, which set atune an Æolian harp fitted into an opposite window.

"Loleta, — my Loleta," the child murmured, as he partially awakened. And as she bent over him he stretched up his arms and clasped them around her neck.

"Loleta," he sighed again.

"Yes; *oui, mon bébé,*" she said softly, her lips against his throat.

"Loleta," once more, "if an angel did fall out of Heaven, do you s'pose he would be hurted?"

The oddity of the question brought a laugh to her lips, as she kissed him again, saying gently, "You are dreaming, *mon bébé*, and yet awake. Now you must go to sleep."

It was not long before they were both sleeping, with the door between them set wide-open. And the night winds wandered amid the strings of the harp as if —

"Spirit hands from unseen lands"

were straying over them.

CHAPTER XXV

THE next morning ushered in a fair day, with a breeze that had in it a touch of autumn briskness, until the sun neared noon.

Captain Leslie had driven down once more to Pilot's-Head, taking Margaret with him. Doctor Jasper was at the house when they started; and the Captain had said to him, with a prodigious amount of winking behind his daughter's back, "Now, don't be lonely, my lad. Stop here, if you like, or take a walk, and then come back to us. We shall surely expect you to supper; and I hope you 'll feel like playing a little cribbage this evening. We 'll have a talk and a smoke, later on, when Peggy goes off to 'dance with the sandman.'"

Then to Margaret, "Now, my lass, are the sails all set, and the anchor up? Then off we go."

And now to the horse, "Hi, you lazy Carrots, — git!"

With this he slapped the reins and awakened the old beast, who was soon ambling off up the street, guided in the Captain's usual erratic fashion.

As they drove away, Margaret looked back smilingly to say, "We shall surely expect to find you here waiting for us, and supper."

Doctor Jasper went into the house and sat awhile in the library, absorbed by his dreams and hopes,

half fearing, yet wholly wishing, to know whether he was to gain or lose that for which he was longing as he had never longed for anything before.

As the hall clock struck eleven, he arose, and, picking up his hat, went out of doors, turning his steps toward the Harwood place.

This he was not long in reaching; and, as he unlatched the gate, he saw Loleta, far back toward the side of the house, near a little rustic pavilion.

It was a distinct relief to him when he caught sight of the gleam of her white gown amid the green of the shrubbery, for he had been dreading to see her clad in the sable garments which custom might have induced her to wear. A broad-brimmed hat was hanging from her arm, and as she bent over the flowers, the sunniness of her hair seemed to blend with their bright hues.

He opened the gate softly, and went in, trying not to attract her attention too soon, for fear that she might fly before he could speak to her. But she saw him before he had taken many steps, and waited, with calm eyes and faintly smiling lips, until he stood before her.

"You are well?" he asked, with an eagerness he could not hide, while he retained possession of the little hand she had extended.

"Oh, yes; quite well," as she gently withdrew it. "And you?"

"Me? I am always well," he answered, speaking quite shortly.

He could scarcely have told himself why, but somehow her perfect serenity jarred upon him.

Had he pressed himself for the reason, he would have found it in the contrast her apparent composure afforded to his own perturbed condition of mind.

"Ah, then," she said, with a little laugh; "if you are always well, you are one truly to be envied."

The only notice he took of this was to smile into her uplifted eyes, as he asked, "And Captain Jack, — is he also well?" — adding, in a tone that made her lids droop, "It seems so very long since I have seen either of you."

"Jacques? Oh, yes. He has gone with Mammy Zabette, for a walk."

She spoke with a lightness that seemed to wilfully ignore the deliberate seriousness of what he had just said.

"I wonder you did not meet them," she added, "as it was to the Tapley's house they did go, on an errand; and that is near to Mrs. Bessly's."

He explained that he had not come directly from there, but from Captain Leslie's.

"Ah, Margot is then at home? I am glad; and it must be for you a pleasure."

She said it with an air of perfect frankness; as if sure of the happiness he must find in Margaret's society, and as though it were quite an understood thing that such was the case.

This, feeling as he did, his heart filled with passionate love for Loleta herself, was hard to bear.

"Let us go into the summer-house," he said, almost brusquely. "Don't you think it will be pleasanter there?"

Had Loleta been looking at him she would have seen an expression in his gray eyes that no woman's heart could have well misunderstood.

She led the way silently into the little pavilion, but made no movement to seat herself; and so he also remained standing. Between them was a small rustic table; and her slender fingers began to tap impatiently upon this, as she stood with lowered eyes, while he looked into her lovely face as if trying to read the answer to what he was about to say.

Presently he asked abruptly, "Why did you speak in that way of Margaret's return, — as if it was such an unalloyed pleasure to me?"

"That way?" lifting her eyes, while her brows arched in surprise. "I am sure I do not know. I did only think of the *bonne camaraderie* between you two, as it did seem to me. And then she is so bright, — so happy-natured, always, is Margot."

She was, despite her show of indifference, evidently troubled, or embarrassed, by the intent look of his eyes, for she now took a rose from her gown and began to play with it nervously.

"Good comradeship," said Doctor Jasper slowly, taking advantage of the expression she had used. "I wish you and I might always have *bonne camaraderie* between us. May it not be so, — will you not promise me it may be so for the future?"

She did not answer. And he urged, "Tell me, may it not be so?"

At this she exclaimed in a voice whose bitterness startled him, "I? Ah, no!"

"And why not?" he demanded quickly, resting

his hands upon the little table as he leaned over it toward her, trying to look into her averted face.

"I will tell you," she replied, speaking very low, and with such a sadness in her voice as he had never heard before. "It is because I can have no wish for any other *camaraderie* than Jacques may give me."

As her eyes met his, she raised her head and asked, while seeming to make an effort to push away what his face now told her, "Have you never heard of 'clouds driven by a wind, — wells that hold no water, — stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever?' I am of these; and such have no care, — no, nor right to ask for *bonne camaraderie*. I cannot care for such things, and do not wish to talk with you of such."

"Loleta!"

It was the first time she had ever heard him utter her name. Her face paled, and he thought he saw an angry light come into her eyes.

"Loleta, — Loleta," he repeated, his low voice vibrant with intense feeling as it dwelt lovingly upon the name. And he saw the anger, if such it was, fadè away, leaving a new wistfulness in the lustrous eyes, while a faint quivering touched her lips.

Bending his face nearer to hers, he made a motion as if to take the rose, with which she was still playing.

She did not resist; and, as their hands met, there was but one meaning for her in the firm clasp of his strong fingers, — a meaning that compelled her to

lift her eyes to meet the look in his illumined face.

She stood as if dazed; until, reading naught but love in her upraised eyes, he bent over and laid his lips upon her own.

With a half-suppressed cry of alarm, she pulled her hands away, and stepping back, covered her face with them. Then she stood silently, with bowed head, her hands over her face, while the jewels on her white fingers twinkled like little mocking eyes full of derisive laughter.

He also stood and waited, his lips tingling with that kiss, and his blood coursing madly. But his firm chin and square jaw were set rigidly, and his gray eyes became darker as they watched her; for he felt that she was angry with him.

After what seemed many minutes, she looked up, and he saw that some violent emotion possessed her, for there were tears in her eyes, and her lips quivered pitifully.

"How dared you do that?" she exclaimed at last, brushing the tears aside, and making an effort to control the trembling of her lips.

The lines of his eyes narrowed, and he raised his chin higher; but his voice was as low and tender as before.

"To lay, for the first time in a man's life, the best, highest, and purest love, — love eternal and divine, at a woman's feet, — it seems to me that this calls for neither apology nor excuse."

She looked away from him, and moved back. But he followed her, asking impetuously, "Will you not

even answer me? Loleta, — Loleta, I love you, — do you not understand? I think I have loved you since the first moment I saw you. Your love will make a Heaven of my world, — can you not give it to me? I pray you to speak, for I cannot live another day and not know that I have your love, or the chance of winning it!"

But she drew still farther away, putting out one hand with an imperious gesture.

"Answer me, — you must answer me," he commanded, rather than urged. "Or say nothing, but come to me. Then I shall — "

"Stop — wait!" she exclaimed. "No!" — for he had extended his arms toward her — "do not touch me!"

She looked down, and twisted her fingers together nervously.

"Yes, I will answer you. And it is this I have to say: That you mistake, — that you have mistaken something I have said or looked. It grieves me much — very much; but I cannot let you talk to me so — never. No" — after a moment's pause — "never!"

He approached closer, and attempted to take her hands. But she held them before her repellingly, as she recoiled from him.

"Is it that you will not understand?" she cried wildly. "Well, then, listen to this — that I do detest you when you do talk so to me. Go — go, I say. But no, — it is I who will go!" And she was gone before he could speak.

He did not offer to follow her, but threw himself

down upon a rustic bench. And presently, scarcely knowing it, he found himself watching a colony of ants gathered at his feet.

They were apparently in a state of great perturbation over the peril likely to come from the tip of the boot intruding so dangerously near themselves and their homes.

He noticed this, and smiled in a hard, bitter way, as he thought, "How much better off in the hands of fate are we, with all our schemes and dreams, than are these little crawling wretches, hundreds of whom I could crush with one step, even as fate has crushed me and my hopes?" And he muttered aloud, "She says she detests me, — detests me for loving her!"

"Ah, *mon Docteur!*" came joyously, and a small body dashed impetuously against him.

The man felt a strange comfort as he put his arms about the little form.

"Will you not kiss me, Captain Jack?" he asked. And the answer came quickly, when the child's lips touched his cheek — and more than once.

As the Doctor looked at him he saw a puzzled wonder in the luminous eyes, as though the lad's sensitive nature had felt the touch of pain in his friend's voice.

"I will fetch Loleta," he said, springing from the Doctor's arms. But a detaining hand caught him almost roughly.

"No, no; I have seen her, and she has gone into the house. I must be going too, pretty soon, after I 've had a little visit with you."

This appeared to allay the child's anxiety, and he began to talk away in his usual nervous, disjointed fashion.

"Did you ever hear of the king who did throw a golden goblet into the sea? I think I do know where it is, or where one just like it is."

The announcement was made with an air of profound mystery.

"No; you don't tell me?" the Doctor said, with feigned amazement.

"But I *did* tell you," the child insisted. "It is up at Planche's Gully, down through the water, in the seaweed, under a rock. I am going to tell Uncle Billy, and ask him to look for it. Jenny and I did see it this very morning. Do you know Mrs. Tapley's Jenny?"

"No, I can't say that I do."

"Well, she 's only just a little girl; and she does have a stick-out on her back. Mammy Zabette does say she is a bumpback."

"I guess you mean humpback, don't you, my little man?" And the Doctor smiled mechanically.

"Oh, yes, I do remember; it is a hump. But it was made to grow, Mrs. Tapley says, from a bump. Oh, *mon Docteur*," with a merry laugh, "that does be poetry, — bump, hump — hump, bump. I did" — now very seriously — "make up a poetry once, and Loleta did write it for me, so as to have it all right. If you like, I can speak it to you; but you must never tell any one about it."

"I would like very much to hear it; and I promise never to tell." His face was sober enough to

satisfy the questioning look of an older person than the one to whom he spoke.

Captain Jack dismounted from the Doctor's knee, his movement starting into flight a plump robin that had been picking from left to right, on its way into the summer house. Then he removed his hat; and the light caught his short-cropped curls in a way to remind Doctor Jasper of how it had glistened from the gems on Loleta's fingers a little while before.

The child stood perfectly erect, and throwing out his chest, repeated, in a manner that betokened careful training:—

> "Little boys and little girls,
> With your little golden curls,
> Let the goodness have the best;
> Let the badness be the least."

Then, replacing his hat, he silently and solemnly resumed his seat upon the Doctor's knee, while he heaved a deep sigh of satisfaction, as if in the contemplation of a great work well performed.

"That is very fine indeed, Captain Jack; how came you to think of it?" And the Doctor actually caught himself smiling.

"I don't know; only that it did just come. And now I will tell you something more; but it is a story about a princess. I did make it myself, the other day; and grandmère did say I should make it for my English lesson, and that it would make me remember. But I don't know why she did smile, or why did Loleta, when she wrote it for me, just like I told her. Grandmère did say she would have me

fix some of the words. But" — with a little sigh — "they were not fixed; and so I do only know it as it was when I did make it."

"So much the better. I would rather have it just as you made it, and before any of the words were fixed."

"Would you? Well, then — listen. It was on the top of a high, high hill, the castle was, where she did live. And there did come many gallant knights to sue the princess."

"To do what?" asked the Doctor in considerable amazement.

"To sue her, of course," Captain Jack repeated, looking into his friend's grave face as though surprised to find him so ignorant. "Do you not know?"

"Don't you mean that they came to woo her?" the Doctor suggested.

"Perhaps," with a good deal of doubt. "May be it is as you do say, for you see I did never speak anything only French, until we did come here to live. After that, grandmère would not let me speak it to any one, 'cause she did want me to speak only English. But I do get all *pix'lated* sometimes."

Now Doctor Jasper laughed.

"You need not laugh at me," the child said reproachfully. "That is what Uncle Billy, and Sam, and Mrs. Bessly, and Jane, and Eph, — it is what they all do say."

"Never mind, my dear," the Doctor replied soothingly; "that's all right. And now, as Uncle Billy would say, 'heave ahead' with your princess."

"Oh, yes. Well, you see her father was a king, and did keep her shut up in a room, behind the curtains. And when the knights did come, she did enrage from the curtains. And she did wear a cap all adored with pearls."

"Well, well, my little Monsieur Malaprop," the Doctor interrupted, again laughing aloud. "Do you know, Captain Jack, that you have made me laugh twice? And I thought not very long ago that I should never laugh again."

"Why not?" Captain Jack inquired with much concern, looking intently into the man's sobered face. He seemed to have forgotten all about his princess, and what happened after she "enraged" from the curtains, wearing her pearl-"adored" cap.

"Oh," the Doctor began, scarcely knowing what answer to make, and wishing he had not put his thoughts into words, "I don't feel quite right; that's all."

"Does your head ache?" the child asked with evident solicitude.

"Yes, a little, perhaps. But"—looking at his watch—"now I must be going. Be sure that you remember where you left off telling me about your princess; and the next time I see you we'll have the rest of the story."

"Very well," said Captain Jack, resignedly, as he slipped from off the Doctor's knee. "But please tell me before you go, who is 'Monsieur Malaprop,'—is he a French gentleman?"

"Yes; sometimes French, and sometimes English. I guess he belongs to every nation. Some day we'll

have another nice sail with Uncle Billy, and then I will tell you about him, and you shall tell me all about your princess."

Captain Jack accompanied him to the gate, and, after a good-by kiss, scrambled up to perch upon one of the pillars standing either side of the entrance, so as to watch his beloved *Docteur* out of sight.

CHAPTER XXVI

DOCTOR JASPER walked slowly away, bending his steps toward the old burial ground, where he stopped to sit a few minutes by Tom Leslie's grave.

The Harwood plot was not far off; and he now saw for the first time the marble cross upon which was carved: —

"Leonie, Beloved Wife of John Harwood."

She lay beside her husband, and beyond him rested three of his unmarried sisters.

There were several blackened stones in the plot, telling of Harwoods who had lived and died far back in the seventeen hundreds, and on down through later years. The clover and grasses were growing deep and sweet above the mounds; and here the bees were straying with peaceful hummings.

Moss and gray lichens spangled the blackness amid and over the lettering upon the stones, and ivy trailed its dark green luxuriantly.

The world's fret and jar seemed to have receded far away from Doctor Jasper as he sat with uncovered head beside the grave of Tom Leslie. The gently waving larches and evergreens sent down checkered shadows over him, while he dreamed

again of the days when they were together, so short a time ago, and yet seeming — with all that had befallen since — years back.

Then his thoughts passed from their turmoil to the contrast of the silent forms and hushed voices of those who lay about him.

Their ears were deaf to either praise or blame; their songs and laughter forever hushed; their tears dried; their cold hands folded over hearts that once had beaten hot as his own, filled as his was with love and longing, dreams and plans. Doubtless these same hearts had ached, as his did now.

He raised his eyes to a fleet of white clouds sailing overhead, looking like the wings and draperies of a company of angels on their way to earth. Then his gaze fell again to the scene about him, and he suddenly encountered the sharp eyes of old Sam Ayres, who was fussing with a dismal arrangement intended to fence a near-by enclosure.

It was of iron, as was also its small, cramped-looking gate, adorned with a clumsy weeping-willow. There were smaller specimens of the same tree dotted along the fence, and above each of them was a horribly suggestive combination of skull and cross-bones; while the whole affair shone with glittering black paint.

Captain Leslie, speaking of it, had said to the Doctor, "Why it was that old Deacon Berry, the schoolmaster, should choose such a piratical-looking fence, is something I never could understand. It was a clear case of sailing under false colors, for the Deacon, who was the very soul of meekness, to tack

to his mainmast the emblem of Black-beard and his cut-throat followers."

Old Berry had slept for many years within this plot, in company with others of his family. And his surviving daughter, coming to the town for a visit, was having Ayres straighten the fence, which was certainly very much askew.

"'T is the frost hev hove it," the old fellow declared to Doctor Jasper, shaking his head mournfully as he pointed to the erratically aligned fence. "Susan Berry Dolittle hev come down here ev'ry year from the place she lives at, since I've been sexton; an' it 's allers the same old tune she pipes: 'Now, Sam'l Ayres, what do I pay ye for, ev'ry year, I 'd like to know, but to look arter the grass an' plants? An' ev'ry year the fence is as crooked as a ram's horn,' says she. An' I tell her, jest as I tell you, sir, 't is the frost hev hove it. An' I wonder it ain't hove to pieces, seein' as it 's hed to weather so many frosts."

The Doctor now thought to ask him where they had buried the unknown suicide.

Sam faced about, and took off his hat, to scratch his gray head. Then he pointed with a claw-like hand to the far end of the burying ground, where the stone front of a large vault loomed up.

"He lies in there, sir. Thet 's the town vault; an' there he was let lie. It hed n't been opened for nigh onto twelve years; an' the bones piled up on the floor, 'cause o' busted boxes, looked awesome, I tell you. I hed to clean 'em out; an' I buried 'em in a heap, over in thet corner," pointing in an opposite direction.

Doctor Jasper turned his back on such ghastly

talk, to take his way down through the town to Mrs. Bessly's. And later in the afternoon he went over again to Captain Leslie's.

It was late when the Captain and Margaret returned. Both of them were quite tired; and Margaret, more quiet than usual, failed to notice the Doctor's preoccupied air, or the quick, questioning glances her father shot at him.

While they were at the table Eliza kept up a lively flow of gossip that rather entertained the others. And after tea, when her father and the Doctor sat down to their cribbage, Margaret went to the piano.

She remained there for a time, touching the keys softly and vaguely, wandering from one thing to another, until at length, with an apology for being so sleepy, she said good-night.

As soon as he heard her close the door of her room, the Captain lost all interest in the game, and said, as he threw down his cards, "Well, my lad?"

"It's very far from being well, I can assure you." And the Doctor made a rueful attempt at a smile. "To tell you the truth, Captain, it's all wrong."

"Aye?" There was a world of interrogation in that one small word, as the Captain uttered it.

Doctor Jasper explained the matter to his friend, who listened with increasing interest, until finally he seemed to get excited, and, springing from his chair, began pacing the floor.

"I've the welfare of Jack Harwood's lass at heart as truly as my Peg's," he declared; "and I don't like to think of her being in that big lonesome house, with only the child."

Then, pausing in his march, he asked, "But you 'll surely not take 'No' for an answer, my lad?"

"I don't know whether I will or not," was the unsatisfactory reply.

"You don't know!" exclaimed the Captain. "Why, man-alive, what do you mean by being so easily downed? Cheer up, I say. Shame on you!"

"But she said she detested me."

"What's that?" the Captain inquired quickly. "Say it again."

"Those were her very words — that she detested me."

"But how did she act when she said it, — did she seem to be very fierce?"

"I think I might safely say that she did." And a bitter smile touched the Doctor's lips.

"Then," said the old sailor, speaking very calmly, "to put it plainly, my lad, — she lied!"

"Sir!" A bright flush leaped into Doctor Jasper's face, as he looked up in mingled amazement and anger.

"Hold on a bit, my lad; hold on." The Captain came and threw himself into a chair directly in front of the Doctor, upon whose knee he placed a restraining hand.

"I mean," he said, emphasizing each word by a thump of his brown fist, "that the speech did n't come from the girl's heart, and that she did n't mean what she said."

"Do you really think so?" asked the younger man, but with an air of little hope.

"Think so? Of course I do; I 'd be willing to

stake anything upon it. Now look here, my lad,— do you go back, and ask her all over again. Don't take another 'No,' but make her say 'Yes;' and keep at her until she does."

"As to the first, I don't think I will; and as to the last, I am very certain that I cannot."

He spoke with moody calmness; but Captain Leslie laughed in an odd sort of way.

"You don't think you will, eh? Well, that's the sound, but not the sense of it, to my way of thinking. Now you've no need to tell me anything more, for I am old enough to see things for myself. And to me your meaning is as plain, at the bottom of all your talk, as the fish I can see swimming under the surface of the water in Margaret's aquarium over there."

"Well?" the Doctor said, with a sigh. But he looked gratefully into his friend's kindly eyes, and seemed to find a glimmer of hope in his earnestly spoken words.

"I want to set you on a right course, my lad, and not have you go floundering about like a rudderless craft. And so I'll tell you, as you're so down in the mouth, 'though I am not sure that I ought to say so much, — but I'll tell you that the girl is every whit as soft on you, as you are on her."

"What are you saying, — what do you mean!" exclaimed the Doctor excitedly, springing to his feet and laying his hand on Captain Leslie's shoulder as he looked down into the laughing face.

"I mean just what I say, and think I speak the truth. But sit down again, lad; sit down and listen."

His hand closed over the one resting on his shoulder; and still holding it, while the Doctor resumed his seat, he went on, "How do I know it? you 'll ask; and I will tell you. How did I know when to prepare for storms, and when to look for calms, — when to take in sail, and when to get every spare rag ready to be set, — and all this when I was a much younger man than you are to-night? What did the good Lord give me senses and understanding for? To use them, of course. I saw the girl looking at you one day, when you happened not to be noticing."

"Well?" Doctor Jasper said again, a new expression coming into his eyes.

"It was like the curtain being drawn suddenly from before a cabin window, — like standing in a dark night, and looking into the cabin when it is lit up. I saw it all there, my lad, — inside. I saw that she loved you."

His voice had become lower in its tone; and he spoke reverently, as of a holy thing.

"I wish I could believe that you saw truly." The feeling of hope that had entered Doctor Jasper's heart now sent a tremble into his voice.

"I did see rightly, my lad; I 'm sure I did," the Captain insisted. "I have n't the slightest doubt of it. And Jack Harwood's lass is not one who would have a light or frivolous mind about such a matter."

"Then," asked the Doctor, still unsatisfied, and dwelling upon facts, "why did she say that she detested me?"

The Captain laughed. "I guess she was shenan-

nagging, that was all, just as the best of women will sometimes do; and she did n't mean what she said. Now I tell you to go and see her again, and find out for yourself if I am not right. And as long as it does n't mean scuttling a ship or kidnapping a woman, you may count upon me for sympathy, and — what 's much more to the purpose — help, if I have the last within my power."

"You have already given me any quantity of both." And Doctor Jasper grasped his friend's hand.

"Fiddlesticks, lad, fiddlesticks! And still I am glad to have you think so; for it 's mighty hard for a man when he can't get the lass that 's taken his heart. Love is a queer thing, and affects men very differently. Some of them seem to have the gift of pretty talk, and so get what they want all the quicker, while others are as dumb as an oyster. Now I was one of the sort who could never talk soft — never. For all I loved my lass so as to lose sleep, and not be able to eat properly, for fear she might be thinking of giving herself to another man, all I could say to her was, when the time came, 'I wish you 'd marry me, Emily.' And she had to trust the future to give her the full soundings of my love, — something she never managed to get, after all, through the many years we were aboard the same craft."

He leaned back in his chair, and blew his nose violently. Then, with a dreamy look in his eyes, he continued in a softened tone, "Do you know, my lad, it 's a great thing to be on the sea, with the one you love by your side? Sometimes, when I can't sleep,

and lie in the dark, thinking, there comes the memory of tropical nights we sailed through, with the dew glittering like diamond-dust upon the rails and skylights, and the moon, big and yellow, in the southern sky; or, perhaps, no moon, but only the stars. And such stars as they were, so big, and bright, as no northern skies can show, and with the southern cross, like a banner of Heaven, among them. And my ship driving along, calm and peaceful as Heaven itself, while close to my heart was all I loved best."

He sighed; and his voice sank into a silence the other man did not care to break.

Presently the Captain reached for his pipe. He filled it slowly and carefully from the earthen jar beside him, saying nothing more until he had lit it and thrown away the match.

"Ah, my lad," — and his voice now sounded tremulous — "old times are the best and happiest, as perhaps you 'll come to see, when you are down the hill as far as I am. But" — speaking more animatedly, and a smile coming to his lips and eyes — "of course I can't expect you to agree with me upon that point — at least not to-night; and perhaps you never will. Only mind what I tell you — stick to a straight course, and make the lass say, 'Yes;' and never give up hope, so long as she has power to say anything."

CHAPTER XXVII

MORE days passed; and they found Doctor Jasper drifting aimlessly along, his heart alternating between hope and despair.

He had called twice at the Harwood house. The first time he was, to his surprise, informed by Pierre that his mistress, accompanied by Jacques and Zabette, had gone to the neighboring city to spend a few days; and calling again after he knew of their return, his summons was answered by the old negress, who told him that her mistress was engaged, and could receive no one.

The autumn had come; and all about the hillsides nearest the shore were the fish-flakes, thickly spread with drying cod.

The yellow sunbeams of the afternoon slanted across the upper meadow, where old and young Sam Ayres were gathering their last load of hay; and the bright light made the prickle of an unshaven beard glisten upon the old man's cheeks like hoar-frost on the red leaves and hedges.

"Sam," he was saying, while he looked sharply about the field, "where did the little lad go?" — the question referring to Captain Jack, who had been waiting to ride to the barn upon this last load.

"The old nigger woman come 'long, an' got him to go with her. Did n't ye see me lift him over the

wall? She told him she was goin' down to Planche's Gully; an' I guess he went 'long to play with humpbacked Jenny."

"It beats me holler," said his father, "the sewin' them Harwood women hev for folks to do for 'em. When Madam was 'live thet black wench was everlastin'ly goin' down to Planche's Gully for M'ria Tapley to do sewin'; an' seems to me it 's the same with the young un."

"Well, dad," laughed young Sam, "you don't have to pay the bills."

"Shet yer head for sass," the old man growled; and the discussion was dropped.

An hour later, Doctor Jasper sat in his room, looking — as he had been for the past hour — out of the window. There was an open book upon his lap, but it was long since he had glanced at it.

Mrs. Bessly suddenly appeared in the doorway. She was quite breathless, and waited a moment to recover herself. Then, in the manner peculiar to some people, she asked, and answered, her own question.

"Captain Jack ain't here, be he?" And she looked about as if the Doctor might be suspected of having concealed the child somewhere.

"He is not, as you say," was the answer, given with a smile.

"Mammy Zabette 's downstairs, lookin' for him," Mrs. Bessly went on. "She says she took him down to Planche's Gully, an' went in to see Miss Tapley for a minute, leavin' him to play with Jenny. An' now she can't find hide or hair of either of 'em."

"There is Uncle Billy," said the Doctor, as he spied him on the wharf; "perhaps he can tell where the youngster is." And raising his voice, he called to the old man, who only shook his head.

"Oh, well," Mrs. Bessly suggested; "like as not he's took hisself off home."

She turned to go; but the Doctor stopped her, to say that he was about starting for Captain Leslie's, where he should take tea.

When he reached the Leslie house, Eliza told him that the Captain was still up-town, but that Margaret was in the orchard.

He was sufficiently at home about the place to join her unannounced, and found her watching a flock of pigeons, who were feeding upon some grain she had scattered. She stood with her side toward him, a bunch of salvias in her belt making a scarlet gleam against her black gown; and she did not see him until he spoke to her.

"Now that you are here," she said, after greeting him with her customary cheeriness, "let us sit down and be comfortable. Papa won't be long away; and when he comes we'll go in and have tea. Then afterwards you and he can play cribbage, and do all the talking you like. But now I have something to say to you."

"Yes?" he asked, as they seated themselves. And he wondered to see the blood rise to her cheeks.

A moment afterwards she sprang up, saying nervously, "No, don't let's sit down. We'll walk, and then I can talk to you better."

With this she laid her hand upon his arm in a way

that led him to turn and look at her. But there was a perfect unconsciousness in the act, and in the light clasping of her pretty fingers, — a smaller edition of her father's shapely ones.

"I wanted to speak to you of Loleta," she added, looking up into his face.

He started, and turned his head away, as she took her hand from his arm and stood before him with downcast eyes, one foot gently tapping the ground.

"You know she has returned from the city?" she said interrogatively.

"Yes; I was there yesterday."

"Oh, were you? I saw her this morning, and she did not speak of it." And Margaret's eyes rested rather curiously upon the Doctor's face.

"I did not see her; Zabette said she was engaged, and could see no one," he explained shortly, looking off, while an unusual scowl knitted his brows.

There was a pause, and then Margaret said, "She went to the city — so she told me — to settle some business matters of her grandmother's. It seems odd, does n't it, to think of Loleta having to look after anything of that sort?"

He was still looking away, and seemed not to have heard her query, for he made no response.

"See here," she said impetuously, "why don't you want me to talk with you about Loleta? Papa told me —" She paused, seeming embarrassed, and a little startled, as he wheeled toward her suddenly, appearing, as she thought, a bit angry.

There was another pause, while they stood looking at each other, until Margaret, taking heart of grace,

said frankly, "Why do you care — object, I mean, because papa told me? He and I tell one another everything. We were speaking of how lonesome Loleta must be, and of how beautiful she is; and then he told me that you — you — "

A deeper flush of color now came to her face, and she looked at him with something very like anger in her sparkling eyes.

"Don't look quite so savage," he said, trying to smile. And at this she laughed, — a queer, low laugh, holding no merriment.

They walked along in silence until Doctor Jasper spoke again.

"There was very little for your father to tell, after all, except that I love her. And yet how much there is in that! So much that I could n't tell, if I tried, and would only bore you if I made the attempt."

She looked at him oddly for an instant, then, with a little shiver, turned her head away.

"Are you laughing at me for being such an idiot?" he asked, a resentful suspicion sounding in his voice, as he tried to look into her averted face.

At this she turned toward him, and the sea-blue eyes flashed so angrily that they scarcely seemed to be her own. And yet, to Doctor Jasper's surprise, he saw, or thought he saw, tears in them.

"I — I laugh!" she exclaimed. "Oh, — but you are cruel!"

"Cruel!" he echoed wonderingly. "What do you mean by that?"

"To — to — think me so unfeeling," she stammered, dropping her eyes. Then, lifting them, now free

from tears, if indeed any had been there, "I don't wonder that you love her. And I am glad; for she deserves all, and the very best all, of any man's love."

She stopped, and he was about to speak, when she put her hand to her throat with a quick, nervous motion, utterly unlike the calm Margaret to whom he had been accustomed.

But this was only for a second; and then her brave eyes met his unflinchingly, as she said, "What I wanted to tell you was that I hope you will get her to say, 'Yes,' and that you will take her away from here; for I am sure she is very unhappy where she is. It seemed dreadful in that house to-day, — so lonely."

"I thank you very much for your kind wishes," he replied quietly; "but — she does n't love me."

"What!" exclaimed Margaret, looking greatly amazed.

"I say that she does n't care for me."

Margaret was silent, her face showing still more surprise.

"The fact is," the Doctor confessed, attempting to smile, "she told me that she detested me."

"What did you do, that provoked her to say such a thing?" The question was put with a demure curiosity that was most tantalizing.

He made no reply to it, and was beginning to feel uneasy, when she said, looking at him in that same odd way, "Let me tell you, as your friend, that I don't believe her."

"What do you mean?" he demanded eagerly, for here was a repetition of the Captain's opinion.

"It may not be right for one woman to betray

another," she replied guardedly. "But I am your friend; and I love Loleta very dearly, and wish to see her happy. I am quite sure you have the power to make her so, — the ability, as well as the desire. And it is dreadful to think of her being all alone, as she is now."

A new light came into his eyes, and he looked at her in silence for a moment before he said slowly, "You almost make me feel like trying again."

"Trying again!" she repeated after him, with a note of something like scorn in her voice. "Of course you 'll try again, and again, until you win her."

Then her manner and tone changed, and she added earnestly, "Loleta is entirely unlike any one I ever knew. At times she is so strange as to almost frighten me. She has never, since I 've known her, acted as if she were really happy. But I am sure she cares for you, and very, very much, if you can make her admit it."

They were now at a standstill; and, turning quickly, Doctor Jasper took both her hands.

"Margaret," — and there was a huskiness in his deep voice, — "God bless you for the hope you have given me. I cannot be too grateful for having such a true friend as you have shown yourself to be."

"And papa, too; you must n't forget him. He is your friend; and here he comes!"

She spoke with a gayety almost hysterical, as she pulled her hands away; and he looked at her closely, now feeling certain there would be tears in her eyes.

But this time he was surely mistaken, for they were as undimmed as his own. And he smiled, as there came to his mind old Dan Maloney's remark, made that very morning, as he stood at the door of his little shanty to have his wrist (dislocated the night before) examined.

"Ah, Docthur, dear," he had said, "but wimmin be quare things."

And he would have shown himself still wiser had he added the withering commentary furnished by his brawny wife, who called from within, "An' if they do be quarer than min, thin I do give up that they 're quare indade. For, by the same token, the min is blind as moles, so they be, and as consayted as paycocks that goes sthruttin' up an' down all their days, seein' nothin' that 's under their fate!"

"Hi, there, my lad, — how goes it? Come in to supper, you two; Eliza says it 's all ready."

The Captain, who had appeared at the corner of the house, stood waiting until they came up.

"Now," he said, "we 'll have something to eat; and then we 'll pass the evening in our usual wildly hilarious manner."

The glow of sunlight was going fast, and the twilight came creeping over the town and harbor, and up each mast and spar, like a miser seeking for every glint of his gold. The tide was not yet fully in; and one small gleam of light that came, brass-hued, out of the western sky, was reflected and held steadily in the little pools among the rocks.

An hour later, Margaret, at the piano, had started to sing "The Armorer's Daughter," when Doctor

Jasper, who stood looking out of the window, turned and exclaimed, "Oh, no, — not that, please!"

This silenced her at once, and the next instant her fingers were ringing out a gay waltz. Then they wandered into a quaint introduction, followed by a low accompaniment; and looking over at him, she said, "I have a new song of the sea; listen, and tell me if you like it."

He came and stood by the piano; and beginning anew, she sang:

"Seldom seems a sky so bright
As the sunset sky to-night.
Yet it lieth far away,
While I walk in twilight gray.

"Lo! — but here a bit of tide,
Hemmed by rock on either side,
Gleams, and in its self-content
With a gleam yon sky hath sent.

"Tide, thy wall of rock about
Cannot shut that gleam without!
Sky, couldst thou withhold thy might
From that lonely pool to-night?"

There was a sadness in Margaret's voice that gave a deep, poignant meaning to the words, and one that touched Doctor Jasper's mood like a sympathetic hand.

"I like it very much," he said, in reply to her inquiring look. "And I want to tell you this — that it is a great comfort to have such an understanding friend as yourself."

She did not reply, but kept on running her fingers softly over the keys.

Outside, on the piazza, Captain Leslie stood looking seaward through the gathering darkness, his hands deep in the pockets of his loose coat, and the smoke of his cigar speeding quickly away from him. It promised to be a thick night; and there was already a sharp wind, bearing a suspicion of dampness, which might mean rain, or perhaps was only the drift of the ocean.

Something suddenly appeared to the Captain's vision. It was something or somebody quite small; and whoever it was bobbed several odd little courtesies from the grass below, as a childish voice announced, "Please, sir, I 'm Sary-Ellen."

"Oh, you are, are you?" he said encouragingly. "Well, my small friend, what do you want, out by yourself at this hour of the evening?"

"Please, sir, they sent me to see if the little Harwood boy was here."

"The deuce they did! And who are 'they?' Who told you to come here and inquire about him?"

"Uncle Billy, an' the big colored lady from the Harwood house, an' a lot o' folks on the beach. They can't find him nowheres, an' they 've been lookin' ever so long."

The Captain began to feel a bit troubled. "Where are they all?" he asked, — "those people who have been looking for the boy?"

"Down on the beach, sir, by Planche's Gully."

"Well," he said, "you run and tell them I 'm

coming right down there. Here," as the child started to go, "hold on, Mary-Jane, or Ellen-Sarah, or whatever your name is, here 's a quarter to buy yourself some candy."

Sarah-Ellen clutched the money with delighted surprise, bobbed once more, and fled away through the dusk.

As the Captain went inside for his hat and stick, he met Eliza, and thought it worth while to make some inquiries of her.

"Land-alive," she said, when he had told her of the little girl's errand, "hev n't they found thet boy yet? Zabette was 'round here 'fore five o'clock to see if he hed n't run up here to see Marg'ret. Where on earth d' ye s'pose he can be?"

Margaret looked serious, but had little to say; and Doctor Jasper, taking his hat, said that he would accompany her father.

They started at once, and had not gone far before they met several men and women straggling along the road and beach above Planche's Gully. Mammy Zabette was amongst them; and upon recognizing Captain Leslie and the Doctor she exclaimed despairingly, "Den de *bébé* no wid yo', an' no bin t' yo' house?"

The Captain answered her; and, in reply to his own questions, she said that having been sent down to see Mrs. Tapley about some work, she stopped at the Ayres' hay-field for Captain Jack, and took him with her.

She had left him to play with little Jenny Tapley, while she went within; and, after coming from Mrs.

Tapley's house, she stepped across the street to Mulling's shoe-shop, to see about some slippers for herself.

When she came out the child was not in sight, and she called him, but without receiving any reply. Then, after looking about, she concluded that he had gone home, and followed along after him. But he was not at the Harwood house, and could be found nowhere.

This was the substance of her story; and it awakened a strong anxiety in the minds of Doctor Jasper and the Captain.

"Where does the little Tapley girl say she left him?" the former asked.

"Why, sah, *le Docteur*, dey doan' fin' her, eider, — not nowhar'."

He questioned her sharply as to the length of time she was at Mrs. Tapley's, and in Mulling's shop, the Captain listening intently to every word, while he tapped the ground nervously with his cane.

Presently some one touched his shoulder; and, turning around, he saw a somewhat familiar face, although the dusk made the features uncertain.

"It 's me, Cap'n, — 'Curran' Jelly,' " the newcomer said in a hoarse whisper. "I want to speak to ye." And he moved a little way off.

The Captain followed; and when out of earshot of the others, "Currant Jelly" said in the same low voice, "As I was passin' Planche's Gully late this arternoon I see ther lad an' ther little humpback gal a-foolin' 'round an old tub of a dory thet 's been tied to ther shore three weeks past. He was rockin' it,

an' laughin'; an' she set in ther stern, holdin' onto both sides, and laughin' too. An', Cap'n, ther tide was a-goin' out fast; an' ye know thet down there it allers tears out an' in like all possessed."

"Anything else?" The Captain's stick beat the ground harder than before, and his voice was as hoarse as the one to which he had been listening.

"Well, Cap'n, ther boat 's gone; Miss Tapley an' some o' ther rest of us hev jest found it out. An' now don't ye think ye 'd best tell ther nigger woman thet Cap'n Jack is likely to hev drifted out to sea a spell? An' be sure to tell her thet a lot of us are calkerlatin' to go arter him right away."

Captain Leslie was about to reply, but "Currant Jelly" had disappeared.

The Captain went back to where the others were standing, and assuming an air of calmness he was far from feeling, let Zabette understand as much as he thought proper of what he had heard, doing it in a way calculated to encourage, rather than alarm her. Then he advised her to go home at once, and tell her mistress that men had been sent out to find the child, and that he himself, with Margaret, would soon be up to see her.

"I think you 'd better look after matters yourself, and find Billy; don't you, my lad?" he said, turning to Doctor Jasper as Zabette moved away.

"Surely," was the reply; "and I 'll do it at once."

"I 'll join you later," the Captain added; "but first I must take Margaret up to Loleta. I know Billy will need no urging; and of course you 'll go with him. And if some one has run across the chil-

dren, which I think very likely, we 'll have the young monkey safe in his bunk long before morning. You see the tide will be coming in by eleven o'clock; and the wind is turning to blow on shore. I don't think their boat can have drifted far away."

With this he started to join Margaret, while Doctor Jasper went to look for Uncle Billy.

The old man was soon found; and with him were both of the Ayres, and "Currant Jelly," all of them preparing the "Pretty Sally" for her quest.

They gladly made room for the Doctor, and were soon under way, accompanied by several other boats; for the news of the child's disappearance had spread quickly, and he was a favorite with every one.

After they had gone, those who were left continued to wander about the shore and rocks, talking in subdued tones, and straining their eyes, as they looked into the darkness.

When Captain Leslie returned from the Harwood house, several other men joined him as he sat on the steps of the old wharf. All the jollity was gone from his handsome face, and his eyes were fast hollowing, from their steady watching for the searchers' appearance.

At last, and just as the stars were paling, the "Pretty Sally" swung to her moorings. And Captain Leslie's heart gave a leap, while those about him set up a cheer, as the old dory from Planche's Gully was seen, towed astern.

But there was no answering shout from the little sloop. Uncle Billy's face was set, and Doctor Jasper's a shade whiter, when they came toward the wharf.

Young Sam Ayres' eyes looked as if he had been crying, as he slowly mounted the steps, and said to the Captain, loud enough for all to hear, "It 's only the little girl — Jenny, sir, thet we 've found."

Captain Leslie jumped to his feet, and there was dead silence as the elder Ayres came up the steps, followed by Doctor Jasper and Uncle Billy. Old Sam held the little girl in his arms; and, as they reached the topmost step, Uncle Billy brushed past him, and was the first to speak: —

"We overhauled ther old craft, Cap'n, an' found ther poor little gal 'most scar't ter death; an' she 's told us ther story. It seems thet she were in the dory, alone, when ther rope snapped. An' whether Cap'n Jack jumped for ther boat then, or hed a-holt of it all ther time, she can't seem ter say. But his hands hed a-holt o' ther gun'al' for a minute, while she looked inter his face; an' then ther water was goin' over it. Ye know how ther tide churns in thet there gully, whether it be comin' or goin'; an' — she jest heerd him give a sort o' gasp, an' his holt seemed ter give 'way, an' he went under."

The old sailor's voice was so strained as to sound entirely unlike his usual gruff tones; and when he came to the end it sank so as to be indistinct.

Captain Leslie had been sitting upon a pile of lumber, and his face was growing white and stern. Beside him stood Doctor Jasper, feeling as he had throughout the night, — as if the surf were roaring in his ears, while the pain and pity of it all numbed him past speaking.

Some of the women were sobbing aloud; and they

all crowded around the pale, sickly-looking girl who stood shivering in their midst, glancing about vainly for some relative in the crowd, and apparently too much dazed to go home alone.

Eph now came hurriedly along, searching for Captain Leslie and the Doctor. His mother had just returned from the Harwood house; and she sent him to tell the Captain that Loleta had insisted upon Margaret (who had been with her all night) returning home with Mrs. Bessly, as she preferred to be alone.

"Perhaps it's just as well," muttered the Doctor. Then laying his hand on Eph's shoulder, he added, his voice sounding as unnatural as had Uncle Billy's, "I want you to go up there right away, and tell her — tell Miss Harwood, that I shall come shortly, and that I am sorry to have no good news for her. And don't tell her anything but that, Eph, — not another word."

"All right, Doctor; I'll be careful," said the kind-hearted fellow, in a softened voice, as he shuffled away.

There was a short interchange of ideas, accomplished with very few words; and then Captain Leslie and the Doctor decided upon what was to be done.

A large dory was manned, and the Captain took his position in the bow.

"Pull away, Billy," he said; for the faithful old sailor had doggedly refused to let one of the younger and fresher men take his oar. And, as he bent to his self-chosen task, his labored breathing and hag-

gard face told the story of what he was holding in check.

Along the horizon, in the east, the bright dawn was beginning to touch all things with the yellow light that was the forerunner of the sun; and the purpled gloom of the shadows over the western hills was climbing up and away.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THEY pulled a straight course for Planche's Gully, where a few of those left upon the wharf had, by walking along the shore, arrived a little before them. These first-comers were looking carefully about, taking note of things on land, while the eyes of those in the boat scanned the water, and the small wood and stone barricade that helped to keep off the violence of the incoming tides.

They saw where the old dory had been fastened. And there was the long black rope, rising and sinking like a snake, while its unravelled strands were turned seaward, like skeleton fingers pointing to an unnamed horror.

The first ray of sunlight had shot, clearly level, over the sea, when, as the searchers in the boat peered in under the timbers that upheld an old, disused warehouse, more than one pair of eyes saw a small object swaying in the water.

A groan burst from some of them, making those on shore stop where they were, motionless and silent, although they could not see what was so plain to the others.

It was Captain Jack. His blue sailor shirt had caught and wound itself — when the tide was higher than now — about a snag in one of the posts forming a support for the floor above. And here he had

remained, moving backward and forward, with the sluggish water.

It was Doctor Jasper's arm that reached below the surface, to encircle the little body. And as he did this the waves tossed one small hand so that it fell, icy-cold, upon his wrist, as if now, even in death, the child were greeting him with the same loving caress he had so often bestowed in life.

Captain Leslie made no attempt to hide the tears that coursed down his cheeks. And Uncle Billy, his head framed in his arms as they rested against the gunwale of the boat, was sobbing like a woman, heedless of his oar, which another man caught and held.

Tenderly, as something most precious, the child was drawn into the boat. Uncle Billy, without a word, stretched out his arms to receive the small inert form and then placed it across his knees, while he looked into the white face upon which his tears fell unheeded.

Only once did the old man speak, and then it was to mutter hoarsely, "He be gone — gone, Doctor Jarsper; an' I doubts if I ever weather sech a bitter heritage o' woe!"

It was the Doctor again who, when they reached the old wharf, carefully wrapped the child in the warm blanket Mrs. Bessly had brought out, while Uncle Billy crouched by, clutching its folds, and stroking them in a dazed way, as if still striving to do something for his beloved little comrade.

They all — excepting Captain Leslie, who went home to Margaret — returned to the boat, and rowed

directly to the little cove at the foot of the Harwood estate. Here the dory was soon beached; and Doctor Jasper, with Captain Jack in his arms, stepped ashore, followed only by young Sam Ayres, until Uncle Billy said brokenly, "Let me look at him once more, Doctor Jarsper, — jest once more."

The Doctor nodded, and all the men left the dory, standing with uncovered heads, while he laid his precious burden upon the grass and gently pushed the blanket away from the still face.

Uncle Billy went on his knees and gazed with streaming eyes at the white features, while he took one cold little hand and stroked it softly, as he had done so often before.

The lids were over the eyes, for Doctor Jasper had bandaged them with his handkerchief, which he only removed now, when Loleta was about to see the child.

There was a smile on the lips, whose rare sweetness was in nowise disturbed; and the early sunshine was making glintings amid the gold of the short curls, from which the sea-water was dried away.

Doctor Jasper, as he looked down into the beautiful face, was thankful to know that when the boy was brought to Loleta her eyes would find nothing unnatural in his appearance; for he seemed as if only sleeping, and smiling in his dreams.

The men turned slowly away to the boat, Uncle Billy being the last to go, when the Doctor, again wrapping the blanket about the little body, lifted it and took his way alone through the meadows, up to the back of the house.

As he hoped, Loleta, with all the servants, was

watching from the front, — all except Venus, a Virginia negress, who flung the door wide open as she saw him approach.

"Oh, t'ank de Lawd, you 'se got him!" she exclaimed joyfully. "Is he sick, or on'y 'sleep, de bressed lamb?" But looking again into Doctor Jasper's face, she gave a loud cry.

"Be quiet!" he said sternly. "Go and tell Zabette to come here at once, but without alarming your mistress. But here, first of all, show me where I can take him. Remember that your young mistress must not see — must not know, until I can speak with her."

The woman, deaf to his words, continued her lamentations; and he was about to speak again, when an inner door opened, and there was Loleta, with Zabette back of her.

The girl seemed turned to stone, as she stared into Doctor Jasper's eyes. Then, like a haughty queen, she turned and said, pointing to another room, "Take him in here."

He followed her into the little apartment, and waited silently until Zabette, her whole form convulsed with hard, dry sobs, took the child from him, and sat down, the little body across her lap, with the head resting in the curve of her arm, and against her breast, as all during his short life he had done so many times before.

The tinkling of the fountain in the conservatory came to them, and the mocking-bird and troopial were singing merrily, as though belonging to a world and life set apart from grief and sorrow.

The darkey, Louis, had attempted to enter the room, but Zabette motioned him back fiercely; and Venus, who was his mother, followed him away.

All this time Loleta and Doctor Jasper stood facing each other. She looked at him dully, as if waiting for him to speak; and it was as if all capacity for emotion lay swooning within her.

Before he could open his lips, Zabette partially removed the blanket, and Loleta's eyes fell upon the white face and tawny head, upon the stiffened form, the nerveless hanging hands; and such a low cry of anguish broke forth as smote his very soul.

A moment later and he thanked the God of Mercy for the rain of tears that followed.

Taking the child from Zabette, she sat down upon the floor, rocking herself back and forth as she held him close to her breast, murmuring over him incoherently, now in French, now in English, until the Doctor, unable longer to bear the sight of her agony, and yet scarcely conscious of what he was doing, stepped forward and laid his hand upon her shoulder.

"Let me alone!" she cried out wildly, but without looking up. "He is mine, — do you hear? I tell you he is mine, *pauvre petit! Mon bébé!* You are my own, my very own *bébé;* and they did make me disown you, for pride's sake. Pride, pride!" and she laughed hysterically. "What have I to do with pride, now that my *bébé* is gone, — gone, like grand-mère? I do tell you, and do you go out and shout it to all the world, that he is my own baby, — mine, *mon douce bébé!*"

Doctor Jasper started back as from the stroke of

an unexpected lash, for her words seemed to pour a flood of light upon things he had felt, but not understood, — upon surmises amid which he had been groping aimlessly for weeks.

But he had no time to think of this, for Loleta's strained voice broke, and she fell back swooning against Zabette.

He hastened to take the child; and having laid him upon a couch, he lifted Loleta, and bade the old negress lead the way to her mistress' chamber.

It was the first time he had held her in his arms; but, so tense was the strain upon his feelings, and so complicated had his thoughts become, that he gave the fact no heed, nor did any emotion, save a dazed wonder, touch him as he bore her along quickly, and placed her upon the divan in her own room.

He made Zabette promise to give her a sleeping powder he would send, and that she would summon him instantly, if she thought he was needed, whether her mistress wished it or not. Then, at the first sign of returning consciousness, he left them together.

Pausing by the couch in the little room downstairs, he took one more long look into Captain Jack's sweet face; and having drawn a bright-hued cover over him, he passed out of the house, with a whirl of thoughts dinning madly through his aching head.

The cove was empty. The men had not waited for him; and he was glad that it was so.

He reached his room unmolested, Mrs. Bessly having left the outer door unlocked; and having prepared the powder, he determined to take it up himself, as the surest way to have it delivered. And,

aside from this, he felt as if he dared not yet trust himself to be alone with his thoughts.

When he reached the Harwood house he saw only Mammy Zabette, and learned from her that Loleta was now sitting beside the bed in the child's room, where they had placed him.

He handed the powder to the negress, with strict injunctions as to its being administered, if necessary, and was about turning to go, when she said, fumbling uneasily with the door-knob, "Pleasy, sah, *Mo's'r le Docteur*, yo' woan' mind nothin' Missy Loleta say? She wur gone crazy, fo' sho'."

The Doctor glanced at her almost angrily; but all he said was, "Never mind about that, but be sure and send for me if there is anything I can do, no matter what it is. Tell your mistress I am anxious to be of service to her."

With this he went away in the bright morning sunshine, his heart oppressed by a strange heaviness and dread.

This time he found Mrs. Bessly standing by her gate, her eyes red from lack of sleep, as well as from weeping. And so were those of Mary-Alice and a kind-hearted neighbor, with whom she was talking in unnaturally subdued tones, as they stood with shawls over their heads and shoulders.

They all turned to look at him. But dreading their questions, he gave them a short "Good-morning," and went into the house, whither Mrs. Bessly followed him at once.

"Now, land-sakes, Doctor, do ye jest come right out to the dinin'-room an' hev some hot coffee I 've

med for ye, even if ye don't tech another thing. Me an' Jane hev been keepin' a nice hot breakfast, hopin' ye 'd feel like eatin' somethin'."

He acquiesced, to her evident satisfaction. And, for a wonder, she was silent for a time, sitting down after he was served, and looking at him wistfully out of her moist eyes, while she sniffed occasionally, and rubbed her little fat nose with her apron, in an absent-minded way.

He drank the coffee, and was about to go, when she said in a very calm voice, — so phenomenally calm that he was startled into eying her, and thinking of his immediate surroundings, "D' ye know I 'm not a mite surprised at what 's happened? "

He looked at her with something like interest.

"No," she went on, with more of her usual manner; "not a mite surprised; for Madam's hands an' fingers were as limber an' nat'ral as mine be this very minute."

"What do you mean? " he inquired, wondering what might be coming.

"Why, Doctor, did ye never hear thet when a person lies dead, an' their hands an' fingers stays warmish an' limber-like, it 's a sure sign thet another one o' the fam'ly 's goin' to foller 'fore long? "

He smiled faintly, in spite of himself.

"No, Mrs. Bessly; I can't say that I ever heard of such a thing before."

"Ye don't say so," she said, appearing surprised. "Well, I hev, all my life, an' b'lieve in it; an' so does lots o' folks."

Two days later, Doctor Jasper, Captain Leslie,

and Margaret stood with a number of others by a small open grave in the Harwood plot.

Loleta was not there; and Mammy Zabette had remained with her young mistress. But old Venus, the cook, with her son Louis, whose merry yellow face was now full of grief; Pierre, the elegant; old black Sam, the coachman; Rosa, the pert housemaid, and the small Riar, — these mingled with the crowd, and represented the Harwood house. All of them had been brought by Madame from the south, and, after the manner of their race, they were loud and hysterical in their sorrow over their "little Massa."

Some of Captain Jack's sailor friends, led by Captain Leslie, carried him to the burying ground. Loleta had asked them to do this. And although he said nothing, the Captain wondered, as did Margaret, that Doctor Jasper was passed by, while Uncle Billy and young Sam Ayres had been selected to serve.

The service was simple and short; and as Mr. Lyle's voice ceased, a signal was given, and the little white casket was lifted. Then it sped away into the earth; and as it was lost to view, Uncle Billy, whose eyes had never left it, turned quickly, and pushing his way through the crowd, disappeared.

"And I have lived to see the last of the Harwoods laid away! Poor little chap, — poor, dear little boy!"

So spoke Captain Leslie, while he wiped the moisture from his eyes. It was that same night, and he was smoking out under the trees, with Margaret close beside him, one hand clasping his arm as they paced slowly up and down.

Alone in his room, Doctor Jasper was sitting in the dark, his elbows on the window-sill, and his hands holding his burning head, where thoughts aroused by Loleta's wild words were rioting, mingled with the sad impressions left by the day's events.

And through them all ran the question: What had Loleta said, — what did she mean?

CHAPTER XXIX

THE golden-rod's intense yellow was gilding all the woods and rocks. The "Black-eyed Susans" had usurped the places of their delicate little briar-rose cousins, and their yellow heads showed aggressively along the roads and in the fields. The butterflies fluttered about on mottled wings, and the locusts shrilled forth lustily. The shadows were lengthening; the crickets and katydids getting ready for their farewell concerts. Autumn came early to the shore; and there was already a faint smell of ripened leaves in the air of early morning and late evening.

Captain Leslie could not but notice how strangely quiet Doctor Jasper had become; but he refrained from any expression of wonder, or even of curiosity, feeling that it would be presuming upon his friend's confidence. And Margaret, when the Doctor was not observing, looked often at the troubled eyes and saddened face, while she wondered within herself as to the real cause.

"I never *did* see a man so changed — never," Mrs. Bessly had declared to herself, and also to her confidantes. "I do hope he ain't pestered with no sort o' liver trouble, or with nothin' else real serious. But there," — as if a new thought had come to her — "I

should guess thet he, bein' a doctor, an' a fine one at thet, could tek care o' himself."

It was — to quote Mrs. Bessly again — a "misty, moisty" afternoon, and the weather had been much the same all day. The sky was not to be seen, nor scarcely the earth, the dense fog that shut them away drifting, smoke-like, with a drizzle of rain falling through it.

Her stout boots gave her the tread of a trooper as she came into the room where Jane was crocheting, and the girl raised her eyes, to see her aunt equipped in out-of-doors array, with a marvel of antiquity on her head, doing duty as a hat.

She paid no heed to Jane's inquiring eyes, but dived into a small closet, from which she soon emerged — or retreated, owing to its narrowness — with a huge cotton umbrella. And as she backed out, holding it aloft, like a banner, it gave a sudden lurch, knocking over a paste-board box upon the mantel-shelf.

"Oh, land-sakes!" she cried impatiently, as the box-cover flew off at a wild angle, sending to the floor a shower of buttons, newspaper clippings, sunflower seeds, some string, a lot of thread, knitting-needles, some pens, an ivory crochet-needle, and a big lump of beeswax.

"Never mind, Aunt; I'll pick 'em up," said Jane, soothingly, and kneeling even as she spoke.

"When sech a thing as thet happens," remarked Mrs. Bessly, looking down at the girl, "it's to my mind a livin' example o' 'the total depravity of inanimate things.'"

This was rather too much for Jane's comprehension; and so all she said was to ask from her lowly place on the floor, "Are you goin' out in this weather?"

"O' course I be," her aunt replied, with a touch of irritation. "What be ye thinkin' of, to ask? Don't ye know I 've got to go to 'Mothers' Meetin'' this arternoon?"

"Oh, I forgot about that," murmured Jane very humbly, as she crawled from beneath the table, where she had been searching for a vagrant spool of thread.

"Dear-lands," Mrs. Bessly went on to say, as she looked out of the steam-dimmed window panes, through which the soaked garden showed but vaguely, "it 's a dretful messy day, be n't it? I should n't wonder, though, if we hed a breezin' up 'fore dark, which ain't sayin' it 'll clear; for thet 'll most likely mek the storm worse. But there!" and she brought the iron-shod end of the mammoth umbrella down upon the floor, "to 'Mothers' Meetin'' I must go, an' tek back them tyers, an' git some more, even if I don't do nothin' else. Ye see, Jane," now giving a more personal coloring to her remarks, "we 've laid out to mek a hundred o' them tyers, an' another lot o' big aprons, for women, after the tyers is done for the children; an' so it 's no use o' thinkin' 'bout the weather. It won't be long 'fore them leaves 'll be all red an' gold colored. I declare! I s'pose it 's human nature to like best what ye can't hev. But 'long 'bout now, when I think o' winter comin', an' the flakes o' snow, an' sparklin' o' frost, I think I

like winter best. Then when it 's winter, an' I feel all wizzled up with the cold, I think o' the blades o' grass, an' the green leaves, comin' in the spring, an' all the sweet-smellin' flowers in the summer; an' I git to wishin' winter was over an' gone."

Then, coming back again to the practical affairs of life, "Now, mind, Jane, don't ye let Eph tech thet cold mutton in the closet, for I calc'late mekin' a stew out'n it, sech as Doctor Jasper likes. He 's sure to be home to dinner to-morrer, an' supper too, most likely, as he ain't been in the house all day."

During the latter part of this flow of words, Jane had been, so to speak, launching her aunt out of the front door. And, having taken the water gallantly, Mrs. Bessly unfurled her vast expanse of umbrella, and sailed away with all the dignity of a battle-ship, her emphatic footsteps sending many brown drops flying about her stout ankles and upheld skirts.

At the Leslie house, before a bright wood fire Eliza had kindled, in defiance of the warm-blooded Captain's feeble remonstrances, he and Doctor Jasper sat playing cribbage.

Later in the afternoon, Margaret — who had been out doing some errands — came in, wrapped in a warm woollen cloak, a storm hat on her head, and her face looking, in its tintings, like one of the mother-of-pearl roses on her ebony portfolio.

"Hi, my Pegaway," her father said, looking up at her as she entered, "you are a true sailor's lass for not minding the weather."

"Of course I am," was her smiling assent. "The

rain is rather warm; and it's glorious to feel it on one's face."

"Then it does n't wash off the paint, eh?" laughed the Captain.

And Eliza, who had just arrived with some more wood, added, "An' jest see how it's made your hair curl!"

"Nature's own curling-tongs," Margaret replied with a laugh.

"Speaking of tongs," remarked her father, "reminds me of fire. And here is Eliza, with another cord of wood, when we 're nearly done brown already, because she insists upon it that she thinks, and says you think — "

"Now, Papa Leslie," Margaret interrupted, pausing at the door to look back at him, and with a world of tenderness in her voice, although she was laughing, "never mind what either of us thinks; for you know very well how that dreadful rheumatism lies in wait for you just such weather as this. And yet you scold because Eliza and I won't let you invite it to walk in and take possession. No, sir," very emphatically, "the fire keeps it away from you; so a fire there must be." And she went her way, singing softly to herself as she climbed the stairs.

"Is n't she a treasure ship?" the Captain said, taking "one for his heels," as he turned the jack. "Just a perfect treasure; and, thank the Lord, heart-whole. I sometimes hope she 'll never marry — my brave little Pegaway!"

Loleta's wild words had been ringing night and day in Doctor Jasper's brain. He could not but

feel that they had some deep meaning; and yet he had scarcely dared let himself believe this could be what she seemed to wish him to understand. He could only wonder, and hope, saying to himself that he would wait until he could see her; for he felt that then she would tell him, and all would be well.

The first two times he had called, he was told by Zabette that her mistress said she was sorry, but would have to be excused. The third time he was received; but Loleta's sad face was an invincible barrier, keeping back all he most longed to tell, and ask.

As he sat here with Captain Leslie, and examined his cards, the thought came to him of how lonely she must be; and he said to himself, "Poor little girl!"

Then he looked at the Captain, and added aloud, "I wonder if Margaret has been to the Harwood house?"

"No, — not since day before yesterday; an' then she saw nobody," spoke up Eliza, who was fixing the fire. "Thet poor girl 's 'bout heart-broke, they say, an' ain't seen a soul since the funeral. An' no wonder — Madam Harwood goin' so sudden, an' then the child, the way he did, so soon after, has been dretful."

"I think I will go up there this evening, Captain," said the Doctor, as Eliza left the room.

"Do, my lad. Do, and hoist your true colors again; and go in to win. Now is a good time, for it 's downright cruelty for the girl to be living up there alone, among all those niggers, in the way she

is doing. It 's lucky she has plenty of money, so that she 'll never know want, poor little lass."

Early in the evening Doctor Jasper was on his way to the Harwood house. There was a moan in the rising wind; the mist was less dense, the drizzle more like rain; and the air had grown cold enough to be biting.

Just outside Captain Leslie's gate he almost ran into Uncle Billy.

"Hello, Doctor Jarsper!" exclaimed the old man. "Be thet ye, sir? It 's a narsty night, be n't it?"

"Pretty wild, Uncle Billy."

"Anybody sick, sir?"

"Not that I know of; why?"

"It 's only 'cause I happen ter meet ye abroad in sech a blowout as this here; thet 's all. I 'm glad there ain't nobody sick. Laird, Laird, — it 's 'nough o' sorrow we 've been hevin' for a spell. My old heart 's *thet* sick over ther little chap, Doctor, thet I doubt if I 'll ever be ther same man ag'in. I seem ter keep hearin' thet sweet voice o' his'n pipin' in my ears, an' thet laugh o' his'n, ringin' out for all ther world lek sweet bells soundin' 'cross ther water. Wa'l, we be surely grass, as ther preacher says, flourishin' up so brave, most times, ter git cut down unbeknownst, an' hauled in when we ain't thinkin'. But I won't keep ye no longer. Good-night, Doctor Jarsper, — good-night, sir. Steady yer helm, an' keep ter yer bearin's." And the old man plodded along.

CHAPTER XXX

MAMMY ZABETTE answered Doctor Jasper's ring. And he thought she appeared pleased, as, with an elaborate courtesy, she invited him in, and motioned him to a room at one side of the entrance.

He looked through the open door and saw Loleta sitting before the fire. The leaping flames vanquished the dimmed light of the lamps, and set the pictures and bric-a-brac dancing and shaking in the quivering radiance that touched tenderly the hair, throat, and face, standing out like an exquisite cameo against the dark wainscoting of the room.

He entered softly, and was almost beside her chair, when she turned her head and saw him.

The troubled sweetness of her upward glance, her pale face and tear-stained eyelids — these betokened the conflict of many emotions; but, whether of the past or present, he could only surmise. And over all there was to him a subduing sense of loneliness.

She arose to greet him, and tried to smile. But the movement of her lips faded out swiftly to their former expression as she drew her hand from his clasp.

It was as if she was disconcerted by the eager look of his gray eyes. She seemed troubled, and moved her head uneasily from side to side, while

she resumed her chair, and motioned him to take one a little way off.

"Are you displeased because I came so soon again?" he asked, seating himself.

"Oh, no."

She spoke in a tone of weariness, and as if nothing mattered sufficiently to make her pleased or otherwise.

He went on, — his love sounding in the gentle caressing of his voice, "It is so long since I could speak to you, Loleta; and my heart has been almost broken, as I thought of you."

She turned to him with a frightened look, and put out her hand, as if to stay his words.

"No — no, you must not talk to me so. If you will do it, then I shall have to feel sorry that you did come."

"You say I must not talk to you so? But I must, and I will! I can no more help it than I can help breathing." His voice was low and gentle, but none the less full of decision.

This appeared to startle her; and, seeing the fear that came to her face, he arose quickly and went to where she was sitting.

Her face drooped, and her eyelids fell, as he knelt and placed his hands over the trembling ones lying in her lap.

"Why will you not trust me?" he pleaded, his deep voice tremulous with entreaty. "Why is it that you will not listen to me? Oh, Loleta, give me an opportunity to prove my words, and my love. For Heaven's sake be kind to me. Cannot you say

you will try to love me? Do this, and my life shall prove my love. Say only that you will try and learn to love me, and that you will trust in me."

She raised her head, and he saw tears in her eyes.

"It is no question of trust," she said quietly, with an entire change of expression; "and I do grieve to seem so hard and cold. There should never be any unkindness between you and me — never anything but kindness. But I must be honest, and tell you that for me it is all despair, — that hope and love are things dead for me."

Her voice broke, and his hands stole up to her shoulders, holding them gently, but with a firm pressure. She was sobbing now, with her face against his arm, and was not seeming to heed that he bent over until his lips touched her hair.

And so he knelt, feeling the first sensation of anything like happiness, in knowing that she permitted him to touch her.

No word was spoken until the struggle passed, and she became more calm. Then she drew herself up suddenly and motioned him away.

He arose and seated himself again, now venturing to draw his chair nearer to her; but his eyes never left her face. There was a look of dogged determination back of their great tenderness; and this she must have seen, for she hastened to speak, her voice quite calm, and sweet as ever.

"You have been so good and kind — very, very kind; and so you will be always, I do feel assured. But do not mistake me, nor what I intend you shall understand. And now," she added, with an air of

resolution, "I must tell you of a truth, — of something that is right for you to know, and right for me to tell."

"Tell me nothing!" he broke in impetuously. "Tell me only that you believe in my love for you, — that you will let me love you always, and forever! Tell me only — "

She held up her hand to stop him.

"Again I must ask of you not to do that — not to speak to me in that way. Please do not. You see it was only that I was influenced by old memories, just now, and did feel lonely. And the thought came to me of how fond the *bébé* was always of you."

Again her voice broke, and he made a quick motion as though to go to her. But she made a repellent gesture, and lifting her head with an air that recalled Madame Harwood's queenliness of manner, said more calmly, "Now you will listen to me, for you must listen, and I must tell; and I will weep no more. If Jacques were here I should perhaps try to play the part always, and to the end — the part that grandmère did wish. But now it is that it does not matter."

She spoke the last words in the same tired way as at first, all her energy seeming to have departed.

"It is that nothing does matter," she continued, "except that I think I should be honest, and tell the truth. I should like it if, through you, Margot and all might know it, too."

Doctor Jasper felt that he was about to hear something it would be hard for him to bear; and

he steadied himself for it, as would a swimmer against an oncoming wave.

"Do you remember all I did say to you that morning — that dreadful morning?" she asked, after a moment's silence.

"I thought you didn't know what you were saying — poor little girl," he answered quietly.

Their eyes met steadily; and she did not look away as she said with pronounced deliberation, "I did know very well what I did say; and it was all true."

She waited, as if thinking he would speak. But he did not; nor was there the least change in the look he still bent upon her.

"You shall now listen to me, and never interrupt by one word. Then you will understand how it all is for me."

He bowed silently.

"I was very wilful when I was a little girl; but always so happy, so very happy, in our beautiful home, so far away that it does all seem to me like only a happy dream. Grandmère was so kind to me always; for you see I was all she had left, — all the rest were dead and gone. Of love I never thought, until I did meet Tosso Valle; and then I was not yet sixteen. He was a Greek; and it was quite by accident that we did meet and know each other.

"I will not take the time to tell you every word. But I did see him often, and he did compel me to be secret; and I did deceive grandmère for a long time. He did always seem to live in a ship, that was anchored often in our river. And it was there

he did take me one day, and only Mammy Zabette did know of it; and he did pay a priest to marry us.

"The priest did tell Mammy Zabette, before he left the ship, that he was troubled, for fear all was not well; and he did tell her where she would find him always.

"I did meet this man — my husband — many times. And Mammy Zabette was faithful to me, and did never tell grandmère of my wickedness.

"Then one night he did sail away — did leave me. Then I did become very ill; and then it was that I did tell grandmère everything.

"She did find out from Mammy Zabette the name of the priest, and did go to him; and he did tell her it was not well for me, but that I was the wife of Tosso Valle. And he did bring men to grandmère who did know; and they did show her that Tosso Valle was a very wicked man.

"They did say he had fled from his own country, and was an adventurer, and was in league with the Cuban insurgents, and did promise to bring them guns, and supplies; but that he had not done so. They did say that the Spanish had offered a price for him — for his capture; and one of the men, who had known him a long time, said that it was for murder he had fled from Greece.

"Then grandmère did send me with Mammy Zabette off to the plantation she did have in Cuba, but where she did never live, and knew no one; and afterwards she did come to me herself. It was a lovely place, by a large river. And then when Jacques —" Here the strained voice became infin-

itely sweet and soft; and Loleta's eyes strayed over to Doctor Jasper.

He sat with an elbow resting upon the table, his hand shading the eyes that had, from the first, been fixed upon her face. And he looked more as might a physician listening to a patient than a man hearing the story of the woman he loved.

Loleta recovered herself quickly, and went on, a strange hardness now sounding in her voice, unlike anything he had ever heard there before.

"Grandmère did say that as soon as we could, we should come here, to grandpère Harwood's house by the sea, to live for always. And she did tell me that if I did let all the world think Jacques was her grandson, and never claim him as my own *bébé* — that then I might keep him with me. If I would not, then he must be given away.

"Do you wonder that I did consent to this, — that I should consent to anything, so that I might keep him with me?"

It was a direct question, and she paused, as if expecting him to answer it. But he looked at her as before, although a new tenderness was beginning to show in his eyes.

"You must not think grandmère was hard-hearted; it was only that she did love me the best, and that she was proud of the name. And she did tell me that she did have to pay great sums of money to — that man, to make him keep away from us.

"I did love him once; I am sure I did — very much, else I should not have listened to him at first, when he asked me to deceive grandmère. But

when I did know of all the dreadful things he had done, I was afraid. And when he did care for the money, taking it to give up my love, then I had to detest him."

Doctor Jasper had taken his hand from his face, the better to look at her, for her voice told him that the tigress was aroused. And it brought something like comfort to his aching heart, as he noted the way in which she uttered these last words, — to see the dislike — abhorrence, flashing from her eyes, and dilating her thin nostrils.

But the outburst did not last. It soon passed away, and there returned that same calm — almost weary, manner and voice.

CHAPTER XXXI

"THE reason grandmère did leave our lovely home in Louisiana — our home by the river, was that he might never find us again. But when Jacques was not quite three years old, he did find out where we were, in Cuba; and he did suspect about Jacques, when he did see him. But of course we did not know then what he thought, nor the wicked scheme he did have in his mind.

"One day when Mammy Zabette did have the *bébé* out in an orange grove quite far from the house, this man did steal him. And afterwards it did prove that he had arranged it all; for he did give his ship a signal, and his men sailed away, and we did think they took the child with them.

"But that was only to deceive us; for he himself stayed on shore with Jacques, until he met some others of his men inland, farther up the island, in the woods, where they were hiding away. Then he did send a message to grandmère, asking for more money. She did send it, and so we got our *bébé* back. But he was ill — so very ill; there was a fever coming on him when we did get him back.

"When he was well, we did come to this place. And we did always tell him — *pauvre bébé*, that it

was only a dream; for he did never seem to forget about it, and it did always terrify him.

"We had been here only three years, when the agents grandmère did employ to pay money to Tosso Valle for her, and to keep her informed of his movements, did warn her that he had now found out again where we were; and grandmère was distracted, to know what to do, fearing that he might come here, and not knowing what he might say or do. Then we did hear he was ill, — he did have that raving disease that does come from too much drink; and they did write to her that his head was not quite right, after that. And so she did pay them to care for him, and keep him safely in an asylum, in a city far from here.

"One night he did come here to this house; but no one saw him besides grandmère and Mammy Zabette. He did want money again, — always, only money; and grandmère did tell me afterwards that he was like a madman. We had feared he would come; for a few days before this we did have a letter that said he had escaped from his nurse.

"It was the day before we had to stay on Danger-Head that poor grandmère and I did learn of his escape from the asylum; and she did fear what he might do to us — to Jacques and me. Then, when he did come, she did talk to him bravely, never letting him see her fear; and she did give him a little money — all she did have by her. But she did tell him that if he would let her hide him in the house, and would keep quiet, and promise to go away the next morning, when it should be dark, that she

would give him more money. He did always seem ready to do as she wished — for money, as grandmère well knew."

Loleta's voice grew harder as she said this. And Doctor Jasper, in the light now thrown upon that day to which she had referred, marvelled, with a new admiration stirring his pity, that she could have controlled herself as she did, — could have disguised the awful anxiety she must have been enduring.

But he said nothing, and waited for her to resume; for she had made a short pause.

"She did think to telegraph to the asylum, and have somebody come to take him, and shut him away as a madman; for she did say that he was mad, and she feared he was dangerous. But he did climb out of the window that same night, and did wander away.

"It was he who — did that awful thing, out in the water; and the poor *bébé* did see you and Uncle Billy looking at him. And it was that, and all the trouble with him, that did cause grandmère to die. Then my *bébé* was taken, and I am punished!"

Doctor Jasper tried to speak; but once more did that little hand enjoin him to silence.

"Now you know how wicked I have been, that I did cause so much sorrow and trouble to others. And I ask that you will tell Captain Leslie, and Margot, and all — every one who did know us here, and all who did know my grandpère Harwood. I want them to know the truth, for I am going away."

"Where are you going?" he inquired, in quite a

matter of fact manner, although the emotion he had been suppressing gave a touch of huskiness to his voice.

"Never mind," was the evasive reply.

"When?" he demanded, now speaking somewhat sharply, as if annoyed at her momentary reticence.

"It is that you must never mind that, either," she said, still with a sweet patience sounding in her steady tones.

"Never mind!" he repeated, springing to his feet, and the repressed passion now breaking forth. "But I do mind, and must, and will! Loleta, can you know what you are saying to me?"

He came close to her once more, and looked down into her face.

"What have you and I to do with all you have been telling me? God knows how pitiful — how dreadful, it is, my poor little girl; but it lies far back of the present, and is a closed chapter of your life. No!" — as she lifted her hand again, "I will not stop. And you must listen to me, even as I have listened to you. *I* have something to tell *you;* and it is that now, to-morrow, all the days of the future, are ours — yours and mine. Let us take them, and keep them, and be happy. Loleta," and the passion in his voice gave place to pleading, "Loleta, do not send me away from you again. Let me stay with you, — tell me that you will let me love you all the rest of my days, and that you will let me try to make you happy — try and make you forget all this cruel past of yours."

She arose, and stood silent, with downcast eyes.

"Tell me," he repeated entreatingly; "only say that you will try to love me — much, or little, as you will. I promise to be unspeakably grateful for whatever love you give me — be it ever so little. Tell me that you will know how truly I love you. Only say this to me now; I ask no more."

She raised her eyes slowly.

"Why should I say what cannot be true? Why should I say it, when I have been tearing my heart open to tell you the truth — so much that is bitter, and so dreadful for me to speak about? And all to prove to you that what you ask cannot be."

He moved back a step, saying in a dull, hard way, "Then you do not love me."

"So you do say."

"Do you say so?" he asked like a flash.

She looked away from him, moving her head in that same restless way.

"Who can say?" came at last, slowly and brokenly, as she turned her face still farther from his reproachful gaze.

But he did not seem to have heard her, and an ugly light came to his eyes as he exclaimed bitterly, "Then you still love that scoundrel!"

"Spare the dead," she said gently, — "those who cannot defend themselves." But he paid no heed to this.

"Do you tell me that you still love him?" he cried, catching her wrists with a fierceness to which he gave no thought.

Her lips quivered, and her eyes met his with a sorrowfulness he never forgot; but she said nothing.

"Is it possible that you can still care for him," he persisted, — "that man who ruined your life, and who, as you tell me yourself, bartered your love for the money your grandmother gave him, and whose conduct, as I know now, was the cause of her death? Do you mean me to believe that you still love him? Let me know the truth."

The white lids fell over her eyes, and she tried to withdraw her hands from his tight clasp, as she said — and her voice had a strangled sound, "It does seem all wrong, and very dreadful to me. I cannot let you say such things to me. I cannot forget so easily; and to-night I do think I never shall."

This last came slowly, — deliberately, and as if through her clenched teeth.

It was all; and releasing her hands, he turned and left her.

As the outer door closed behind him, he thought he heard a cry, coupled with his own name; but he told himself that this could not be.

And so, with throbbing head and burning eyes, he turned his face homeward, his heart aching more than ever with the misery of the story he had heard from her lips, and the realization of his denied and hopeless love.

The night was so dark that it was difficult for him to see anything. Many of the street lamps had been blown out, and he was forced to arouse himself, in order that he might find his way, and buffet with the wind, now sweeping in a furious gale from the southeast, with the rain rushing before it like masses of feathers.

At length he leaned against Mrs. Bessly's door, and finding it fastened, knocked loudly.

The noisy summons brought Jane flying to answer him, her face rather white, and looking a bit more scared than usual.

As he entered the house, the wind, rushing in with him, seemed to fill it with the storm, extinguishing the lamp always kept burning upon the small table in the hall.

Jane cried out with dismay; and Doctor Jasper made haste to close and lock the door, just as Mrs. Bessly opened another one, causing a broad beam of light to fall across the far end of the hall.

"Land-sakes!" came in her shrill voice. "Jane Bessly, what's up?"

"I'm up, for one, Mrs. Bessly," replied the Doctor; "or nearly so, as I'm almost at the top of the stairs. I just came in, and have left my storm-coat down there with Jane, as it's pretty wet."

She hurried out into the hall, and looked up and down.

"Land-alive — the lamp's out!"

"Yes, Aunt; but the wind done it," explained Jane, as if to exculpate herself. "An' here I be, comin' to'ards you; so don't move. I've got Doctor Jasper's coat, an' it's soakin'."

"Tek it into the kitchen to dry; the fire's pretty good yet, as I've been fixin' some merlasses an' brown sugar, for Eph's cold."

Then, with a shiver, "The witches must surely be out this night; it's awful, so it is, to hear the gale. It'll mek wrecks 'nough 'long shore; an' I

thank the Lord I ain't got no folks at sea. It 's a comfort to know Eph's tucked in his bed, 'way up under the eaves, even if he 's got sech a cold. But I guess this stewed quaker 'll knock it higher 'n a kite."

By this time she had followed Jane and Doctor Jasper's coat into the kitchen; and the Doctor had locked himself in his room.

All night the rain came down with furious rattlings on the window panes, sounding as if demons were throwing gravel against the glass; and the note of the tempest roared out of the black sky, mingled with shrill cryings and groanings from the rushing wind.

Doctor Jasper lay for the greater part of the night listening to the raging of the storm; the uproar without seeming to deaden — although only in a measure — that within his mind.

Even now, and taking matters as they appeared, there would come a persistent doubt as to Loleta being wholly indifferent to him.

Captain Leslie had said that she certainly was not. And then there was Margaret! Margaret was a woman, and she knew Loleta well. It would scarcely seem possible that she could be mistaken in such a matter.

He recalled Loleta's voice at different times, and the look of her eyes; and these seemed to tell him that she cared more for him than she would admit. And, more than all, he thought again and again of the face laid against his arm, as she wept, and he had almost held her to him.

But why should she persist in her denial, and how could he make her confess to what he had hoped — and still dared to hope — was the truth? What opportunity would there be for this, now that she was going away, intending that he should not know when, nor where, she was going?

But this was not so great a matter; for the earth was not large, and he would search it, and find her, wherever she might be. And perhaps some day she would permit him to serve her, even though she could not give him his heart's desire.

He might be patient, and wait until the end of time, if only he could be near her, to care for, and protect her, — free to love her before the world.

And so the night wore on, and the tempest raged, without and within.

CHAPTER XXXII

FEW people were to be seen in the streets next day. Several wrecks had come ashore in the early morning; and nearly all the towns-folk who ventured out had gone down to the beach, the wind making the weaker ones totter as they struggled against it.

The water was an uproar of trampling seas, rolling and coiling in mighty combers that dashed thunderingly upon the sands, and crashed against the rocks, filling the air with salt rain and smoke-like spray.

Men and women, with occasionally a child, their hair and garments streaming in the blast, stood about, overlooking the wild scene, or exchanging opinions as to suggestive bits of wreckage that had been washed upon the beach below the headlands.

Here the breakers, lifting upwards, darted out long, flickering tongues of white spume that fell against the rocks in ponderous hills; and these again streamed downward, hissing amid the seaweeds that floated out into their seething cauldrons.

As Doctor Jasper stood with many others upon the highest point of one of the headlands, he found it difficult to command his eyesight; indeed all his senses were dulled by the violence of the gale and the uproar of the waters.

And yet all this seemed to accord with the turmoil that had come into his life, making it numb, and dumb, save when a realization of its full meaning shot across his deadened brain, even as a fierce gleam of lightning illumines all things in the dark storm of a summer night.

Every one was watching a craft off to the southeast. At first a mere smudge upon the hard green of the tossing seas, it had grown into a clearly defined shape. And Uncle Darb, spyglass to his eye, bawled out, "Her foremasts 's fell, an' her mainyards 're in two. I 'm 'fraid she 's a goner."

The voices of those about him had been beating against the gale with notes shriller than those of the wind and sea; but now a deep silence fell over them.

The vessel was sufficiently close for all to note that she was not under control, but was drifting with the send of the sea and the force of the gale — drifting straight for the beach below them.

The tempest would throw her high up, on the very crest of the waves, where she would hang for an instant, poised upon the dark ridge. Then she would swoop down, as the supporting sea rushed away in a flattening plain of hissing white foam, leaving nothing to be seen but the masts, standing, hair-like lines, above the howling fury of it all.

It was a marvel to see how she would rise from these depths. But it was only to draw each time nearer to the rift of rocks lying between her wayward course and the beach.

"I only see two men 'board o' her," announced

Uncle Darb, his eye still glued to the glass. "I can only see two, an' they seem to be lashed to the main riggin'; the rest 's prob'ly washed away. Damme, but I 'll try myself, an' see if I can't rig the sort o' craft that can go to rescue poor devils in any kind o' sea. It 's downright onhuman, so it is, for us to be standin' here, not able to raise a hand for the savin' o' them men out there."

The red shirts of these sailors could be seen, gleaming like two tiny, flame-colored spots, growing in size as they rose and fell in the furious tumblings of the sea.

At length the craft struck the rocks, as was shown by a fiercer smother of spray bursting around her; and in the midst of this the masts reeled and fell. Then a mighty sea roared over her; and when it was spent the red spots were gone.

One of the men was washed ashore, where many kind hands were waiting to give him succor. Doctor Jasper started to offer his assistance; but seeing the white head of old Doctor Mix in the throng, he remained upon the headland, where others still watched for the missing red shirt to show in the breakers along the beach.

But it did not appear. The man lay out in the sea, along with one portion of the now halved vessel that seemed fixed upon the rocks, while the other — a black, jagged fragment — was nearing the shore.

All the heart was gone out of Doctor Jasper, or he could not have turned his back upon such a scene as this. But he left the headland, and went

to his room, where Mrs. Bessly had lit a fire, with the result that the air was filled with a far from pleasant odor, coming from a highly endorsed polish, with which she had tried to change the rusty complexion that summer days and salt air had given the queer little stove.

He told her that he was not chilly, and — to her manifest chagrin — requested her not to keep the fire going. Then, taking a book, he seated himself as if to read; but as soon as she left the room he threw the book aside and turned to look out of the window.

This was the first of the September gales; and it had come in full force and fury, the sea running so high that the white flash of breakers was tossed to the uppermost step of the old wharf's stairs.

But at sunset the storm was broken, and the clouds that had lain as night over the face of day opened in the west, like sable-hued curtains, showing the glory floating behind them. The radiance flashed upon the waters, heaving still, but no longer the towering ranges of hills that had chased one another in endless succession all the morning.

The clouds, looking like gigantic demon wings, rolled swiftly through the sky. Under them, against the motionless black of the eastern horizon, the white lighthouse stood out like a height of snowy marble, the sudden gush of sunset glory making its lantern glasses sparkle like innumerable fiery stars. The spite was gone from the wind, although it still blew briskly, and the noise of the surges boomed loud from over the bar.

Doctor Jasper did not go out again. And he felt the first sensation of anything like content with life when he realized that the day was done, and he might soon try to sleep again, — sleep, and so forget.

"Land-sakes! Ain't this been a gale, though!" exclaimed Mrs. Bessly, as they sat at the tea-table. "An' *sech* a wind, — 'nough to blow away yer ears an' eyes, an' lay yer nose on yer cheeks, flat ez flat."

"How 'bout yer tongue, Ma?" inquired Eph, his implied disrespect somewhat modified by the twinkle in his eyes.

"Benjamin Ephraim Bessly!" his mother began; but, seeing his smiling eyes and mouth, she ended good-naturedly, "I always was called a 'great discourser;' guess I was born so."

Before Doctor Jasper retired that night he had determined to have a talk with Captain Leslie, and as soon as he could. He decided to tell him what Loleta had imparted, and ask for advice as to his own course.

The next morning's sun had it all its own way, for the storm was gone.

The Doctor went early to Captain Leslie's, and found Margaret alone, looking over some old scrap-books. She told him that her father had left only a few minutes before, and was intending to go down to Pilot's-Head, to see if the storm had damaged his crops.

He had now gone to see if he could procure a conveyance; and in half an hour, if he did not return, she was to meet him at the Post-Office, — that is, if she decided to accompany him.

"Now, Doctor, I really don't care to go. So why won't you go up and meet papa at the Post-Office, and take my place?"

Her keen perception had told her that some new anxiety had come to him, and that he wished to see her father.

"Why should I go?" he asked with sullen indifference.

"Now, see here," she said a little testily. "Why do you ask such a foolish question, when I 'm sure you are wishing to see papa, and talk with him about something very important?"

"Well, you are right; for I want to see him, and talk to him."

He made the admission in such a lifeless way that she looked at him with renewed interest.

Then she asked quietly, "What is it, — may I know?"

"Oh, Margaret," he burst out impetuously, for the sympathy in her voice had unmanned him; "you don't know how miserably unhappy I am."

"What is it?" she asked again, and in the same calm fashion.

"I will tell you, for she said she wished you to know. But I am sure you will tell no one else — not another soul." And he paused, waiting for her promise.

"Certainly not, if you tell me not to."

"Do you remember the stranger who shot himself?" he asked abruptly.

"Of course I do," looking at him rather wonderingly.

"Well, that man was Loleta's husband. They were married some years ago, and little Captain Jack was their child."

Margaret's calmness was utterly routed by this startling revelation.

"What — what do you mean?" she gasped, dropping the book she had been holding.

"It is true — perfectly true. She told me all about it last night. Poor little girl, — it was a pitiful story; and she has been much sinned against. But don't ask me to tell you anything more now, for I can't endure to talk about it. I want to see your father, and think I 'll go up town, as you advised me."

She followed him silently to the outer door, for she saw it would be misery for him to be questioned; and then she herself was almost too dumbfounded to talk. But as he was about to go, the expression of his face, together with his listless manner, awoke a vague uneasiness in her mind; and this made her say, as she looked up at him with troubled eyes, "You 'll surely come back here before night?"

He stopped, his hand upon the knob of the half-opened door, and seemed to be pondering.

"You will go with papa to Pilot's-Head," she urged, "and then come back with him to supper?"

"Yes," he answered absently; "I think I will surely come back." And he turned away, without seeming to see the hand she held out to him.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE day passed, growing grayer toward its close, as if another gale might be preparing. The light was beginning to fade; and as neither Doctor Jasper nor her father had returned, Margaret was still sitting upstairs in her cosey little room.

A few faint sparkles came from the fireplace, where, between the iron dogs, lay all that was left of the fire Eliza had built in the afternoon. Margaret felt chilly, partially from the nervousness that possessed her, and had drawn a great stuffed chair up to the heat and glimmer; for there was yet sufficient light to make the ruby in the old-fashioned ring on her finger gleam out blood-red, as she sat with elbows on her knees, and her chin sunk in her palms.

It had been a long, lonely day for the girl, and she had spent it aimlessly, while the wind whistled through the trees, whipping off the leaves, and cried down the chimneys in a way that sounded eerie enough. And now, with the sunshine gone, it was all the drearier.

Would her father ever come? And was Doctor Jasper with him?

Perhaps something dreadful had occurred. Yesterday, such a supposition would have seemed absurd. But now, after the surprise of the morning,

and thinking of it all the long afternoon, Margaret's heart and mind were so wrought upon that she could even contemplate the possibility of Doctor Jasper having, in a moment of despair, thrown himself into the sea.

The thought made her shiver, and wish more than ever for her father's return; for, whatever might happen, he was sure to know what was wisest to do.

She arose and went to the window. It promised to be a wild night. The lighthouse lamp was lit, making a path — faint and glimmering, over the rough water at its base. To the southeast lay a great bank of ragged clouds, from which dark streamers radiated over the sky, like the skirmishers of an army; and amid these the evening star twinkled uncertainly.

Raising the sash, she leaned out; and as the odor of the salt spray came driving in, she gave an ecstatic little sniff; for the girl dearly loved the sea.

Then, glancing at the star, gleaming with a pearly light out of the cloud-drift, she was reminded of something which caused her to sing to herself, —

> "Ah, never again, in the sweet spring-time,
> Shall we wander — my love and I,
> When the tremulous stars through fleecy bars
> Look out of the western sky."

She stopped, and laughed softly.

"Oh, fiddlesticks! Of course they'll 'wander,' the same as all lovers do. And so shall I, some day.

> "'Goosey, goosey, gander,
> Where shall I wander?'

And I wish papa would 'wander' home."

It was growing so dark that she could scarcely make out the dividing line betwixt sea and shore; and the air seemed filled by the booming of the surf over the bar.

She closed the window and resumed her chair, wishing for no other light than that from the dying fire, although the corners of the room were darkening with shadows.

Presently she heard steps in the passage, followed by a knock at the door, which was opened by Eliza.

"Why, Marg'ret!" she exclaimed, peering through the gloom. "Hev n't ye a lamp, or any candles?"

"Oh, yes; but I can see well enough, and so I did n't take the trouble to light them. What is it you want?"

"Cap'n says for ye to come down to tea. An' Doctor Jasper's here with him."

"Why, Eliza," said Margaret indignantly, as she started from her chair, "you promised to call me as soon as the Doctor came. And why did n't you tell me papa was home?"

"Well, well!" Eliza answered rather sharply. "I was *thet* busy with the jam all the afternoon, an' it *did* act so like all possessed, I never thought o' nothin' else. Yer pa come in unbeknownst to me, till I heard him an' Doctor Jasper talkin' in the smokin'-room. It seems like there must be somethin' wrong, for they 've been talkin' ever since; an' thet 's an hour ago. I went in jest now to say tea was ready; an' the Cap'n looked *thet* solemn, an' Doctor Jasper was white ez white."

"Very well; I 'll come right down," was all this

lively picture elicited from Margaret. But her thoughts were not untroubled.

She found her father and the Doctor talking earnestly, and the former was saying with an unwonted air of gravity, "I tell you, my lad, that nothing proves more to a man of my years what a fool he has been, than to look back at times in his life when he is forced to own that he had about as much idea of the proper course to steer, as if his head had been tied up in a tarred bag. If we wish to be big men to those who come after us, we should keep no log-books, but always remember to sing, 'I never did so when *I* was young.' Then, you see, they 'll never have a chance to find out what blooming idiots we were."

Seeing Margaret, he paused, and holding out a hand, drew her down and kissed her. Then he made some joking remark, and they all went in to tea.

The Captain watched Doctor Jasper narrowly, for he looked ill, and ate scarcely anything. And there seemed to be good reason for this anxiety; for when tea was over, and the Doctor tried to leave the table, he fell back, fainting, into his chair.

He was removed at once to Tom's chamber, and placed in bed. Then, leaving him in Eliza's charge, the Captain hurried away in search of Doctor Mix.

As Margaret accompanied her father to the door, her pale face arrested his attention, for he took her by the chin and kissed her.

"See here, Pegaway, you 've been crying. Now don't spoil your pretty eyes again, lass. I 'm afraid he has n't been taking a proper amount of food; and

all his worries atop of that, have keeled him over. But I 'll set old Mix after him mighty quick, and you 'll see t' other doctor bob up like a cork."

He kissed her again, patted her cheek, and was gone.

She stood a few minutes where he had left her, looking up at the elm branches tossing against the sky. And the tears started once more, as she thought, "How much misery seems to have come to us, and all about us, beginning with Tom's going away! It was so peaceful, and we were all so happy; and now such dreadful things are happening all the time!"

Doctor Mix said that his patient was threatened with something very much like brain fever; but he thought a quiet day or two in bed, and a few more quiet ones indoors, with proper medicine and dieting, would enable it to be broken up without serious results. And so it proved.

It was the sixth day afterwards, and Sunday. Doctor Jasper had meantime seen no one but Doctor Mix, Captain Leslie, and Eliza. But he was now sitting in the little smoking-room, with Margaret; and they could hear the last echo of the bells ringing for afternoon service.

The Captain had gone to church, more, it must be admitted, to please Margaret, than from any overwhelming desire of his own. And he had left her to look after the Doctor, whom he sternly commanded to stay within doors until the next day.

Eliza also had gone out, in company with Mrs. Bessly, who stopped to see how her lodger was getting on.

Her heart overflowed at the sight of his white face and sunken eyes; and as she passed out through the gate, she said, "Land-sakes, 'Liza, what 's come over him? Why, — jest to look at his face meks a body feel fit to cry."

It was so warm that the windows were open; and the Sabbath's drowsy hush was broken only by the faint sound of the surf.

"Have n't you something to tell me, Margaret? Have n't you seen her?"

Doctor Jasper spoke eagerly, as he leaned forward in his chair.

The girl hesitated, as if not quite knowing what to say; and she seemed to be looking at something through the open window.

"Answer me," he insisted. "Tell me something, no matter what it is."

"Well," said Margaret, speaking very slowly, "I have seen her."

"Tell me, then, how was she — how is she — when did you see her? Tell me how she looked, and what she said. Tell me everything."

The words came like a torrent, and his voice showed no sign of weakness.

"Mercy on us!" Margaret exclaimed in playful protest. "Don't go so fast." But her eyes were not in accord with her manner. "What a perfect shower of questions! And which one shall I answer first?"

"Don't trifle with me," he pleaded, "but tell me all you know."

She did not meet his searching look, but turned

her eyes away as she said, "I saw her Friday, although I had been there once before, when she could not, or would not, see me. But she saw me Friday, and told me all, and more, than you did."

She stopped, as though the subject was ended; but Doctor Jasper would not have it so.

"There is surely something more than that," he declared somewhat impatiently.

"Well, it is only that she has found places in the city for all the servants, except Mammy Zabette; and they have gone to their new homes."

"And Loleta — is she going away?"

"Yes; and Mammy Zabette with her."

"Where is she going?" And he fixed his eyes on Margaret's face as if to find the answer before she could utter it.

"I don't know."

"You don't know!" he exclaimed. "Why — how — is that? She surely did not refuse to tell you?"

"Yes, she did; she wouldn't tell me where she was going, but said she would write to me after a time."

"When does she expect to leave?"

Margaret looked at him, — looked at him keenly, as though calculating how much it would be safe to tell.

"When?" he repeated, with the same impatience he had shown before.

"She has — she has — gone!"

"What!" he cried, springing to his feet.

"She has gone; she went yesterday."

CHAPTER XXXIV

HE fell back in his chair and looked at Margaret, who said nothing more, but arose and walked over to the window, keeping her back toward him. She could not bear to see his ghastly face; neither did she wish him to see the tears she could not keep from falling.

After what seemed to both of them a long silence, she said, without turning around, "Loleta would not tell me where she was going, although I begged her to do so. She said she had mapped out her future life — whatever was left to her — some time ago; and that Mammy Zabette would always be with her. She also said that she might possibly come back here after a while; but she could not say when, if ever. But she promised that she would write to me before long, and perhaps tell me more about her plans."

"And is that all?"

His voice had such a dead, far-off sound that she looked at him over her shoulder as she said, "No, not all; for I told her you had been ill, and asked her for some message, because I knew you 'd like —"

"Oh, you splendid girl!" he cried, the color rushing to his face. "What did she say?"

Her back was toward him again, and she was covertly wiping the tears from her cheeks.

"Don't expect too much," she replied, with a touch of bitterness. "She only said I was to tell you 'Good-by' for her; that she was sorry you were ill, and hoped you 'd soon be as well as ever."

"And that was all she said!" His voice had a sound of utter despair.

"Yes; all she said," with the slightest possible emphasis upon the final word.

But this was sufficient to make a new hope show in his face.

"What do you mean by putting it in that way?" he demanded. "For Heaven's sake go on, — tell me all there is to tell, and don't compel me to drag it from you bit by bit."

At this she turned and faced him.

"She said no more than I have told you. But the way she looked and acted made me understand a great deal more. She cried — cried bitterly."

"Poor little girl!" he said softly. "Poor, dear little girl!"

Margaret once more looked out of the window; and a few minutes later, the Doctor, without speaking, went to his own room, where he shut himself in for the remainder of the day.

As soon as he was gone, Margaret gave way, and had a good cry. Then, following the Doctor's example, she betook herself to her room, where she spent some time in looking over letters and odd relics belonging to her dead mother, this being the girl's favorite occupation for rainy days, and one

indicating an attack of the blues when indulged in at any other time.

Captain Leslie insisted upon the Doctor stopping where he was during the rest of his stay in the little town; and the latter accepted gratefully the hospitality of the old sailor, who seemed to look upon him as another son.

He was waiting with all the patience he could command for Margaret to receive the promised letter; but it did not come. The passing days became long and tedious, — more and more so, as they dragged slowly away. It was only when listening to the Captain's nautically-tinged and heart-warming philosophy, or to Mrs. Bessly's characteristic rattle (during an occasional visit to his old quarters), or when down on the shore or off sailing, with Uncle Billy, that he was forced away from the gloom of his thoughts, and into the daylight of something approaching a living interest.

It was when sitting one afternoon out on one of the headlands, near the "Betsey Brett," and feeling even more lonesome and low-spirited than usual, that he suddenly became filled with a determination to go in search of Loleta.

As the resolve fixed itself in his mind he wondered how he could have been so dull as not to think of it long before. But this he finally attributed to his sickness, and the unnatural mental condition in which he had been since the girl went away.

He would start at once, and go first to Cuba; for it was there he thought she might have gone, to

seek a new peace in her former home, amid surroundings more familiar — perhaps more loved, than here, where so much tragedy had darkened her young life. The island had by this time become fairly quiet; and he felt no misgivings as to his being able to find her, being familiar with the country, and having, by reason of his army experience, unusual facilities for accomplishing his object.

The sun was almost set, and a broad belt of gold lay along the west. It was not the purple and gold of summer, but a clear, cold yellow, showing in streaks between the few violet clouds. The air was very still; and in the mists of the eastern horizon the tender new moon hung like shimmering silver over the dusking sea.

The voices of men counting dried fish came from the big shed-like building over by the flakes, where Uncle Darb and some of his gaffers were at work; and a stronger, clearer voice shouted out the score for the tallyman in the usual colloquial fashion.

"One, *er ma-noo!*"

"Score two!"

"Tray!"

"Score four!"

"Tally!"

As the Doctor started toward Captain Leslie's, the lights had begun to twinkle from the windows all about him, suggesting the cosiness and comforts within.

This reminded him to go to Mrs. Bessly's for some trifles of personal belongings; and, as she

would surely be home at this hour, he could bid her good-by.

He found her on the back porch, skirts pinned up, and with a small red-and-black checked shawl for head-covering and wrap. A goodly portion of the porch was piled high with pumpkins, while Jane and Eph were busy bringing more.

"Good evenin', Doctor Jasper. We're surely goin' to hev a frost to-night; don't ye think so? I do; an' we're tryin' to git all the punkins under cover, so they won't git teched. Ain't they jest golden bu-tees, though? I was always famous for my punkin turnovers, an' promise ye a big taste o' the first lot I mek."

"I'm sorry, Mrs. Bessly; but I'll not be able to sample them, for I am going away to-morrow."

"Is thet so? I want t' know. Well, — land-sakes, how we'll miss ye; 'though p'r'aps I be n't jest the one to say so."

"Why not?" he said warmly. "Who has been kinder to me than you have? It will always be a pleasure for me to remember my summer here with you."

"Will it, though?" she asked, glowing with satisfaction. "Well, now, 't was a pleasure for all of us to do for ye, Doctor; an' I hope ye'll come back next summer, 'long o' the birds an' flowers. An' I'm sure ye'll be jest as welcome."

She now lifted her voice. "Here, Eph, — Jane! Come an' tell Doctor Jasper good-by, for he's goin' 'way in the mornin'."

"Yes," he said to Eph; "and I'm now on my

way to Culman's store, to put my name on the slate, for the stage to call for me to-morrow. Do you think I will find the place open?"

"Surely, Doctor. Ye don't ketch old Culman lettin' the boys shet up the store door till ev'rybody else's door in town 's shet good an' fast for the night. I 'd be glad to go up there for ye, only ma's truck 's got to be brought in from the frost. An' thet can't be done 'less I keep on workin' as long 's there 's light 'nough to see by, which won't be much longer."

Doctor Jasper soon gathered the small articles for which he had come. Then, having bade them all good-by, he went out of the gate for the last time, standing a few moments to look across the street at the old wharf, and out over the sea.

Nothing was stirring but the boats, and these only from the rush of chilly air out of the northeast, making them move restlessly at their moorings.

Over in the west, where the yellow had been, the clouds were gone, and there was a clear patch of sun-glow, in color a faint brassy rose, against which the branches of the elms, now bare of leaves, were sharply outlined; and the far-away hills were blue-black.

As he turned to go down the street the memory of little Captain Jack came to him so suddenly and vividly that he almost fancied he could see the small, blue-clad figure stirring amid the shadows.

Sweet little lad! And Loleta seemed almost as much a memory as the child himself. So, indeed, did all the past summer hours.

Full of these thoughts, he took it as something rather remarkable that when he entered Culman's store the first words he heard were of his dear little companion.

A tall, thin man, sitting on the counter, was saying, as he swung his long legs, "Y-a-s, now thet little Cap'n Jack 's gone, ther last o' ther Harwoods is laid away. An' they was jest about ther finest race in ther town."

"Speakin' o' Harwoods, an' layin' folks 'way," said a dumpy little man perched upon a mackerel keg, off in the shadows, "'minds me o' meetin' old Sam Ayres this arternoon. He said he 'd a big lot o' money from Miss Loleta; an' she ordered him ter tek that feller as shot hisself out in Cove, last summer, an' bury him over in a plot she named. What 's left over in ther matter o' money, arter thet 's paid for, Sam 's ter keep for hisself. 'Sides thet, he 's ter put up a plain white stun, with ther all-firedest outlandish rigmarole on it for a name ye ever read. Sam says he 'll hev nigh fifty dollars left over for hisself. It must be scrum, hevin' money ter heave 'round in thet fashion. It 's lek hevin' money ter burn."

By this time quite a knot of listeners had gathered; and Doctor Jasper, while adding his name to the scant list of those wishing to be called for by the stage, had been absorbing the little man's words.

He was one of Uncle Darb's gaffers — Israel Goodin by name. The long-legged man sitting on the counter — Reddy Banks — was another; and in the crowd were several more.

"Where did ye see old Ayres, an' hear all this?" inquired one of them; and Doctor Jasper added, "Was that all he said?"

Israel bridled with gratified vanity at having attracted the Doctor's attention, while those standing in front of him fell back, and looked on with respectful interest.

"W-a-l," was the drawling answer, "thet 's 'bout all. 'T wa'n't more 'n an hour back since I see him. He was fillin' his pails at ther town pump."

The Doctor hurried away in search of old Sam, whom he found at supper. Upon coming to the door he repeated all that Goodin had said, adding his own theory as to the cause of Miss Loleta's action, — that she had run across some of the dead man's relations, who were probably ashamed of him, and had given her the money to have him buried properly.

"Like all ther Harwoods, she 's *thet* soft-hearted," he said, adding, as if struck by a new thought, "But jest step inside a minute, Doctor Jarsper. I 'd like ter fetch ther paper, so ye can see for yerself the name. P'r'aps ye may know ther fam'ly."

He brought the letter, and put it into the Doctor's eager hands. A quick glance showed that it bore no date, nor the name of the place from which it had been written.

"Where is the envelope this letter came in?" he asked, speaking so sharply as to cause old Sam to look at him with surprise.

"The env'lope? W-a-l, now," scratching his head. "Oh, yes, — I fired it inter ther water."

"The deuce you did!" And Doctor Jasper looked as though he would like to shake him. "I don't suppose you happened to notice the postmark on it?"

"Nary."

It was maddening to hold a paper fresh from her hands, but with no clue — not the slightest, by which to trace it back to its starting point. And the letter itself contained nothing more than he had already heard.

"How d' ye say thet there name she 's writ out — ther name I 'm ter hev put on ther stun?" asked the old man, as Doctor Jasper was turning to go. "Or be it only a motto, in some furrin lingo?"

"It 's the man's name," was the Doctor's curt reply.

"Jest speak it out, sir, won't ye please? Ye 're sech a scholard thet I know ye 'll give it to me straight."

"Tosso Valle, — that 's the name she says you are to put on the stone. Good-night, Mr. Ayres, and much obliged to you; and I trust you will be careful in carrying out Miss Harwood's instructions. And good-by, for I 'm going away in the morning."

He gave a hearty shake to the old man's hand, and hastened off, leaving him muttering to himself.

"Tossel Valle, — or be it Value-y? Smother me, what a name! Anybody 'd say thet 'Curtain' 'd sound better for his last name, ther fore one bein' 'Tossel.' Now what could ye expect of a man hevin' a mother sech a heathen as ter stow him with sech a name for life?"

Doctor Jasper found Margaret and her father waiting tea for him. And, as they seated themselves at the table, he realized again the loyal friendship of these two, and could not but feel sorrow at the thought of his speedy departure. This made it rather hard work for him to announce his sudden determination; but he finally did so.

Margaret, after an exclamation of surprise, remained silent. Eliza was voluble in her expressions of regret. And the Captain said heartily, but with a sad look, "Well, my lad, you may wander far, and make many fine friends; but you 'll never find truer ones than you leave here."

"I am quite certain as to that, Captain; and yet at the same time I feel happy to hear you say so."

"Won't you be coming back to us before summer, my lad?"

"That is more than I can tell, sir. But I will surely come before the summer is over; that is, if I 'm alive."

"Well," Eliza said soberly, with a queer glance at him, "please don't come if ye ain't alive."

"Why do you say that?" asked Margaret. "Do you admit that you believe in ghostly visitors?"

Eliza looked solemn, but did not reply.

"Answer me," Margaret insisted, waking up to something like her usual gayety. "Do you believe in ghosts?"

"Fiddle!" was all the reply she received; and then she appealed to her father.

"Now, Papa, I want you to make her tell us if she ever had a ghost come to see her."

"How ye do run on, Marg'ret," Eliza now said. "But if I told ye what I was thinkin' of, ye 'd only laugh."

She affected reluctance; but there was with it a suspicion of her being amenable to urging.

"No, indeed," said Margaret; "none of us will do any such thing. As for myself, I am in just the mood for what you are going to say. It was only this morning that I was reading —

> "'My bones are buried in yon kirk yard,
> So far beyant the sea;
> 'T is only that my blithesome ghost
> Is speaking now to thee!'

That 's a fine beginning for you, Eliza; so do go on and tell us."

"I was only thinkin' o' Jane Ellis," was the reply, "who lived down this way years ago. She was engaged to Bob Parks; an' he was, I 'm sorry to say, a perfect limb. He was startin' off on a v'yage, an' she asked him to promise surely to come back for Thanksgivin' dinner; he was startin', ye know, in early summer. An' he told her, laughin'-like, yet meanin' it all the time, thet he 'd come surely, alive or dead, or somethin' like thet."

"And did he?" Margaret queried, as Eliza stopped to take a sip of tea.

"Well, in course o' time it come to be nigh onto Thanksgivin', an' Jane Ellis nat'rally hed her mind full 'bout Bob. One night she dreamt thet he come an' stood 'longside her bed, all drippin' wet; an' he spoke to her, while he pulled at the seaweed he was

sort o' draped in. An' what he said was this: 'I be at the bottom o' the sea, Jane, an' so I can't come home for Thanksgivin'.'

"She screamed out, an' they all come runnin' to her; an' she told 'em her dream. But she told me arterwards thet it wa'n't no dream at all, but thet Bob really come to her. Anyhow, he was drownded thet very v'yage."

The evening passed like many others before it. The Captain and Doctor Jasper smoked, while Margaret sang for them; and later on, when she had gone to her room, the two men had a few games of cribbage.

Margaret had sung "Pegaway," and "The Armorer's Daughter," for Doctor Jasper, and had gone her way smilingly. But as she ascended the stairs, her black lashes held the glitter of what had made her backward glance seem wonderfully bright to her father and their guest, as she bade them "Goodnight."

CHAPTER XXXV

WHEN Doctor Jasper awakened the next morning he saw the autumn sunshine standing like a wall of silver through the glass of his half-closed windows.

The sea was purple near-by; but farther out, it was ash-colored, and lively with little surges.

When breakfast was over, they all took a farewell walk down by the shore, passing the "Betsey Brett," where, now that winter was coming, the door was open to the street, and the platform deserted.

As they stood watching the sails dip and rise against the blue of the sky, Uncle Darb came along, looking as if something was wrong; and Captain Leslie hailed him.

The old man stopped, and appeared uneasy. But finally, in reply to the Captain's inquiry, he growled out, "No, I ain't sick, Cap'n; but I 've been makin' a fool o' myself. Ye see yest'day I was tekin' some fellers from New York out for a sail; an' they 'd a lot o' stuff they called 'shampain.' An' 'sham' stuff it was, I tell ye, as consarned the look, an' taste, compared with the power o' mischief it hed in it. It was sweet, innocent-tastin' juice, an' I did n't think 't would do any more harm than so much sugar an' water. So, wishin' to be perlite, I drunk whenever they offered me a glass, thinkin' an'

carin' little for sech leddies' drink, as it seemed to be. But — spike my old guns, Cap'n ! — I got a head onto me that saw stars, an' 'nough fireworks for two Fourth o' Julys. An' I say it 's a disgrace to an old man like me, seasoned with ther fieriest o' rum."

Captain Leslie laughed, and the Doctor had to smile. But as Uncle Darb did not seem to appreciate their levity, Margaret hastened to say, "Doctor Jasper is going away, Uncle Darb, — going to leave this very morning; and you 'll have to say 'Good-by' to him now, for it 's time for us to go back to the house, and watch for the stage."

"Wa'l, I 'm sure we 're none of us glad over that news, Doctor Jasper; but I wish ye all sorts o' good luck." And he gave a hearty shake to the Doctor's extended hand.

"Thank you, Uncle Darb; and I hope to find you well and hearty when I return next summer."

"Hope so, I 'm sure, thank 'ee, an' expect ye will," a broad smile brightening the old man's face. "Me, an' the boats, an' the sea, — we stay here right along from year to year; an' we 'll all give ye a hearty welcome back."

When the stage drew up at the gate Captain Leslie and Eliza superintended the carrying out and disposal of the luggage, being ably seconded by Uncle Billy, who had appeared at the last minute, while Mrs. Bessly and Eph stood just inside the gate, waiting for Doctor Jasper to appear. Mary-Alice also was there, with little Benny in her arms, and Mary-Ellen hiding shyly behind her mother's skirts.

When the Doctor came downstairs he found Margaret leaning against the piano. She was quite pale, and her eyes looked as if she had been crying.

"Good-by, Margaret," he said, advancing to take her hand. But, to his consternation, she gave a choking sob, and turned from him.

This was so unlike her that he stood dumb, eyeing her in perplexity.

"Don't stand looking at me in that way," she said presently, turning to him with an unnatural little laugh, and wiping her eyes with her handkerchief. "You remind me of the way papa used to glare at me years ago, when I didn't want to take my medicine. And it's the same sort of thing now, for it will be dreadfully lonesome when you are gone; and then you know so many things have happened. But there," with another queer little laugh, and tossing her curly head, "I'll take my medicine now, Doctor, and have it over with. Of course I'll keep you informed of everything you want to know, and perhaps more too. And now good-by; for I hear papa calling you."

He said nothing, but, moved by a sudden impulse, bent over and kissed her upon the forehead. And as he did so her color returned, and she gave him a startled upward glance he did not soon forget.

The farewells were soon said to those outside, Captain Leslie coming last, and holding fast to the Doctor's hand until the latter mounted the crazy little steps leading to the open door of the stage.

"God bless you, my lad!" he said. "Good-by;

and come back when you can, and as soon as you can."

Then, "Sheet home!" he called out gayly, waving his hand to the driver, who had formerly been a sailor. And Uncle Billy bawled, "Aye, — overhaul yer clewlines, an' stand away!"

With this buoyant speeding the stage started, rattling along the narrow streets, and out through the old town into the main highway, lined with stone walls that shut in and divided the many farms.

Doctor Jasper first spent an entire month in the city, wandering about all day in search of the face he never for a moment forgot. And his evenings were passed at some one or another place of amusement or recreation, although with but a faint hope of finding success amid such surroundings.

He then went to the joint home of the only other members of his family — his sister and aunt. But he remained with them only a short time, and then, to their great disappointment, left again, announcing his intention to go abroad.

He had resolved to carry out his original plan, and go to Cuba, feeling satisfied that there Loleta was to be found. And a few days later he was in Havana.

Here he remained for over a week, looking about, and acquiring all possible information; but he found nothing to indicate that she was, or had been, in the city. Nor could he find any trace of her in other parts of the island, which he visited one after the other, as he was able to secure transportation.

It was during one of these trips that he went to

Madame Harwood's former home, being able to locate it through information gained from residents thereabout.

He found that she had disposed of the property to a Spaniard, who afterwards sold it to be converted into a hotel. But the splendid mansion had been destroyed, and the once beautiful surroundings now showed a picture of utter desolation.

Upon his return to Havana he found a letter from Margaret, telling him that she had received one from Loleta. It was written from Paris, where she and Mammy Zabette were stopping at a convent, the Mother Superior of which had been a life-long friend of Madame Harwood. And although she mentioned her intention of returning to America, there was no intimation as to when this would be.

He took the first steamer for New York, arriving there just in time to catch one of the French liners bound for Havre. Thence he hastened to Paris, where, as best he might, he made a tedious and ever-baffled search among the convents and nunneries in and about that city.

But all to no purpose. Either the people in charge would not tell him the truth, or else he failed to discover the particular retreat that held the object of his search. And the end of it all found him as completely at sea as though he had not come at all.

CHAPTER XXXVI

MEANWHILE the bluebirds were calling to each other in the old town across the ocean, and the frogs were piping shrilly from the low places.

Spring had come again; and one of the gaffers prophesied to Uncle Darb, while they stood by Culman's ancient stove, redder from rust than with heat, "Ther bull-paddicks sing so loud I guess we 'll hev a wet season."

Walking in the sunset glow, along the already dusty road, on her way home from a visit to Tom's grave, Margaret stopped to lean upon the old turnstile, while a smile dimpled the corners of her mouth, as she listened to the same trio of frogs — judging from the sound — to which her father had called her attention, when, as a much smaller girl, she had passed along this same road one spring evening with him and Tom. And she recalled how the scent of growing things, fresh and sweet as now, then filled the air.

This frog trio was led by a shrill treble, that sang — as Tom translated it, —

"Here he comes! Here he comes!"

To which a deeper voice seemingly responded,

"There he goes! There he goes!"

While a tremendous bass-profundo rounded it out with,

"Good Lord! Good Lord!"

She walked on, across the short-cut of the fields, all odorous with spring blooms, and the air thrilling with the robins' evening songs, when suddenly she saw Mrs. Bessly and Jane standing in front of her, both of them in festal array.

"Land-alive, Marg'ret Leslie, your gray dress meks one think of a ghost, meetin' you here in the fields at this time o' day!"

"But the thought must stop right there, Bess," replied the girl laughingly, "for there is nothing ghostly in what my gray dress covers."

"I don't know 'bout thet," Mrs. Bessly asserted, looking critically at her. "It seems to me ye ain't nigh as plump as usual, an' don't look so well. What did 'Liza give ye this spring — sas'fras, or dandelion?"

"Neither," answered Margaret, laughing all the more.

"Thet 's teetotally wrong," said Mrs. Bessly, who evidently looked at the matter in a serious light. "Ye ought to hev been dosed with one or t'other. Or, come to think of it, I guess gentian 's the thing ye need; an' it ain't too late yet. Jest tek my advice, an' tek some gentian tea."

"Can't I take your advice without taking the tea?" was the quizzical query.

While Mrs. Bessly seemed to be pondering over it, Jane ventured to ask timidly, "What d'ye hear from Doctor Jasper?"

"Yes; where is he now, an' be he comin' here this summer?" her aunt added quickly, appearing to forget all about the gentian as she looked intently at Margaret through the fast gathering dusk.

"He 's in Paris, and has not told papa whether he is coming here this summer."

Her voice had an unusual touch of coldness, for the inquisitiveness in Mrs. Bessly's sharp eyes was not to be mistaken.

But the good woman only said, "Well, — do tell! Ye 'mind me o' what Irish Nora said to Uncle Darb's Eben, when he come 'round this mornin' with a cod. Ye know he broke his arm a couple o' weeks ago."

"What was that?" asked Margaret, rather indifferently.

"Why, she says to him, 'Hev ye it in slats?' 'No,' says he. 'Oh,' says she, 'in paris, then.' Jest as if his arm was in furrin parts."

Margaret laughed, but only from kindness; and Mrs. Bessly went on, "By the way, me an' Jane 's been to Tillie English's weddin'. She married thet limb, Tom Manley; but let 's hope he 'll settle down, an' try to 'mount to somethin'. Thet old shoutin' Methody aunt o' Tillie's, from Vermont, seemed to be runnin' things. She 's as rich as dirt, ye know; an' she hed thet cousin o' her'n, old Deacon Hipstey, down with her, to tie the knot. I s'pose he 's a good 'nough man, even if he does tek snuff, an' talk through his nose. But I do wish he would n't keep everlastin'ly sayin' 'Amen.' It sounds for all the world like a flock o' sheep,

bleatin' out 'B-a-a' every minute. An' he sort o' twiddles his voice, jest as if he was hevin' the 'Amens' jounced out'n him when he was ridin' over a rough road full o' piled-up sins. Dear-lands! Did n't we hev a lot o' sposh this spring, when the snow come to go?"

That evening at the tea-table Captain Leslie ended a long silence by sighing profoundly.

"Dear me," he said, "how I wish the lad would come home! You don't know, Peggy, how I miss him."

She did not reply, but busied herself in tendering Fin a choice bit of cake.

The Captain looked at her keenly, and was about to speak again, when Eliza said, "I met Lydia Tishu up-town this mornin', an' she says they 're beginnin' to bring down things for the place over on Bramble Island."

"Yes," the Captain assented; "I was down on the shore this afternoon, when they were taking several boat-loads of stuff across. One of the men told me the sisters and children are coming here right away."

"Well," and Eliza's voice had a grieved tone, "it 's a real affliction to hev an orphan asylum over there. Like as not we 'll be hevin' another visitation o' smallpox, or perhaps yallar fever."

"Quite a cheerful prospect, that," remarked the Captain, as he rose from the table. Then he tramped off; and presently his strong, mellow voice was heard trolling forth, in a distant part of the house, —

"And out of her bosom there grew a red rose,
And out of her lover's, a brier;
And they grew, and they grew, to the church steeple's top,
And then they could grow no higher.
So there they entwined in a true lover's knot,
For all lovers true to admire-ire-ire,
For all lovers true to admire."

CHAPTER XXXVII

A FEW weeks later and all the fields were green in summer dress, although the short young grass in Eliza's bleaching ground, and out under the trees in the orchard, had not yet come to feathery heads. And here and there, amid the green, a dandelion, close-set, gleamed like a golden button.

The time of blossoms had come; and the trees were thick with fleecy white and pink.

It was now that Doctor Jasper, still in Paris, received a letter from Margaret that put an end to his futile inquiries, and sent all his surmises flying to the winds.

Loleta was back, but not at the old home; for the house had caught fire one night in the early spring, and was entirely consumed. She was on Bramble Island, with the sisters.

A fortnight later Doctor Jasper was at the Leslie house, for the jubilant Captain would not hear of his taking quarters anywhere else.

The same old stage rolled him into town one afternoon, just as the sun was beginning to send level slants across the hills and fields, and over the sea, stretching, blue as sapphire, out to the eastern horizon.

Uncle Billy was the first to greet him, at the Post-Office, where the stage stopped to leave the modest mail pouch. The old man happened to be lounging by the door. But he straightened himself in a trice, and hurried forward to grasp the Doctor's extended hand, while he grinned so expansively as to make it a wonder that his teeth did not forget to keep their firm clinch upon the stem of his short pipe.

"Laird — Laird! But it 's a pleasant sight ter see ye ag'in, Doctor Jarsper! It seems a long time since ye went away."

He stopped, and seemed to swallow something; then, with the smile all gone, he added, "How the sight o' ye 'minds me o' Cap'n Jack, an' ther good times we all used ter hev last summer! He were a gentle, noble little chap, wa'n't he, Doctor Jarsper, with ther sort o' hand ready ter ketch holt o' sech shipmets as might need help. An' when sech teks holt, it 's ther sort as never lets go. Seems ter me, Doctor Jarsper, — meanin' no offence — landlubbers never hev ther same sort o' hearts as is found so common 'mongst old sailors."

"I agree with you there, Uncle Billy," said the Doctor, smiling at the old man's earnestness; "and I am glad to be back among the old sailors. Is the 'Pretty Sally' in the water yet?"

"Thet she be, an' has been for weeks. Won't ye soon be wantin' ter tek a trip in her?"

"Of course I will," was the hearty reply, with a wave of his hand, as the driver came from the Post-Office and scrambled to his seat, the horses having already started off.

That evening, when tea was over, the Doctor and Margaret walked down to the headland opposite Bramble Island, although no word had been spoken of her who was there. Captain Leslie had said, "Before it gets dark, Pegaway, you 'd better take the lad down to have a look at his old friend the sea, while I stretch my legs by going up town after the mail, if old Steve has n't shut up shop."

As they stood looking across the water, a large fishing smack came speeding along under full sail, with a small boat she had in tow pitching and rolling about, forced to follow, and yet as if struggling bravely to keep a course of its own.

"That little boat," Doctor Jasper said, after calling Margaret's attention to it, "seems to me like myself, as I have been for the past seven or eight months."

She did not appear to have heard him, for she looked up and said abruptly, "I have n't told you that Mammy Zabette is dead."

"Indeed! When did that happen?"

"Not very long ago, over in Paris; and that was one reason why Loleta came back here. She told me she felt so lonesome, and was homesick. It was about the same time that the house was burned; and how this happened has always been a mystery. The fire broke out at night, and in the morning that lovely place was nothing but a heap of ashes and rubbish, although the fire engine and a big crowd got there as soon as they could."

"Poor child — she seems fated," he said under his breath.

"Does n't she?" For Margaret had caught the words. "And the way Mammy Zabette went was so dreadful, too. They found her in her room; and the doctor said she had been dead several hours. It seems she had heart disease."

"All this must have been terrible for the poor child. When did you last see her?"

"Day before yesterday, in the afternoon; and I shall probably see her again to-morrow. She comes over every few days in one of the small boats, for provisions."

There was something in the look Doctor Jasper now gave Margaret which she understood fully.

"The Bramble Island boat always lands down in the cove by Uncle Billy's bungalow," she added. "Of course you know where it is, and remember what a fine place it is to beach a dory. And" — still more significantly — "they always come over in the afternoon, between three and four o'clock, or a little later."

"I 'll watch to-morrow," the Doctor said to himself. But he might just as well have spoken aloud, for he knew that Margaret had, in her own way, been telling him how he might see Loleta, and speak with her.

Before long they turned from the sea and the black shadows brooding over it, and took their way leisurely to the Harwood place.

A new moon hung low in the western sky; but there was still sufficient light to reveal the ruin and desolation that lay over the once beautiful home.

The trees showed great ugly gaps amid their

trunks and limbs, where burning timbers had fallen upon them. The water of the pool gleamed only here and there from under the débris which almost filled it; and the marble satyr lay toppled over. Only the little pavilion, so distinct in Doctor Jasper's memory, had kept its familiar appearance.

"Is n't it dreadful?" said Margaret, as they stood looking about them.

"Indeed it is. And just think of how much has happened since you and I first came up this path together!"

"Let me see," she said contemplatively. "It was that night, or rather the morning, after our Danger-Head exploit, was n't it?"

"Yes; and it seems years ago."

"So it does," she said softly. "But," with a more cheerful air, "never mind; for after a while things will come quite as you wish. And, when they do, I don't think the pleasant things of the past will seem so long ago, as when they are now contrasted with an unpleasant present. I have always found it so."

The words ended with a sigh, which, faint as it was, Doctor Jasper heard.

"What is it, if I may ask, that you think might come, and make the gone-by time seem less far away to you?"

He spoke lightly, his voice seeming to have caught some of her own usual brightness.

"Nonsense!" she said, "you know perfectly well that I was thinking only of you. Come — let's go home."

The moon was now sinking behind the hills back of the town, while the wind stirred the tender leaves of the rose-vines budding upon the pavilion, and gently rippled the water about the half-submerged face of the satyr, who seemed to be looking up at the darkening sky.

The only light in Mrs. Bessly's house came from the dining-room, where were two lamps, one of them a large, old-fashioned affair, its crystal bowl showing the clear oil within, and specklessly brilliant without from frequent polishings at the skilful hands of Jane, who now sat close to it, absorbing "James Mountjoy, or, I've Been Thinking."

Eph, newspaper in hand, was reading aloud to his mother, who was rapidly lowering the basketful of socks and stockings upon the table before her.

She had just observed the fast increasing collection of moths and other insects about the lamp, most of them upon their backs, and with spasmodically agitated legs, suggestive of suffering.

"Land-sakes! What a mess on the tablecloth! Talk o' the slaughter o' the innercents by Herod! This lamp is surely a slaughterer of innercent bugs. Jane, go an' shet the back entry door, for thet's where they must be comin' in."

Eph, who had paused during his mother's interruption, now resumed: "An' Mrs. Grubbs's friends an' sorrowin' relations will long remember thankfully that she always indulged the hope — "

"*Thet* she did — cantankerous old hypocrite!" exclaimed Mrs. Bessly, spitefully, as she held her needle against the light, squinting at it over her

glasses while she thrust the yarn through its eye, doing this with a stabbing motion.

"That she always indulged the hope," Eph went on, "an' so died, peacefully rejoicin'."

As he laid the paper down, his mother said, "I seen Doctor Jasper ag'in, when I was comin' from the store. Him an' Marg'ret Leslie was walkin' down to the shore. I s'pose we 'll hear next thet they 're to be married."

"He looked han'some, did n't he, Ma, when we seen him comin' in the stage?" said Eph. "I wish I could travel in furrin parts."

"So 's to grow han'some?" inquired Jane, an unwonted twinkle in her eyes.

Eph looked at her severely; but, before he could think of a fitting reply, his mother gave the matter a new turn, by saying with light sarcasm, "Well, Eph, if ye calc'late to travel many miles from home I 'd 'vise ye to tek along an extry chest o' socks, for the way ye tramp holes in 'em is the beatenest!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE next afternoon found Doctor Jasper among the rocks near the end of the little cove below Uncle Billy's bungalow, whose fastened door and windows gave evidence of the old man's absence upon the water.

The sea glittered, joyously bright, with here and there many-colored patches, made by the cloud shadows passing over it. The day was unusually warm for the season; and the heat was making a dizzy, mist-like atmosphere between the town and Bramble Island, lying empurpled by the distance.

The clock on the town hall had clanged out four strokes a quarter of an hour before, and he began to fear she was not coming. But five minutes later a bare-armed, brown-faced lad beached a rowboat upon the smooth sand.

Loleta was in the bow; and Doctor Jasper watched her with hungry eyes as she rose and sprang ashore.

A long black cloak fell to her feet, giving her a nun-like appearance, although she did not wear the dress of the order, while about her head was wound a black lace scarf, through which her hair gleamed all the more brightly.

He thought that her face seemed thinner, and more pearly, than of old; but it was none the less beautiful.

She stood looking off over the water, while the boy secured the boat. Then, turning to him, she said, "Tony, here is the list; you will take it straight to Mr. Culman. Tell him I did send you, and I think you will find everything quite right. I will meet you here when you return."

He took a large basket from the boat, and trudged away, whistling cheerfully, while Loleta hurried off in an opposite direction from where Doctor Jasper had remained partially concealed.

The latter followed her, as she went rapidly along; and he knew that the way she was taking led directly across the fields to the old burying ground.

He walked slowly, for he could not bring himself to hasten. He was fearing his fate, now that this — as it seemed to him the final — chance had come, wherein he was either to win or lose her.

The grass in the burying ground was short, and the graves undulated to the farthermost walls, like billows of the sea. The marble cross marking where Madame Harwood lay gleamed whiter than anything about, except the small slab near-by that told of little Captain Jack's sleeping place.

These two graves were between Loleta and Doctor Jasper, as they stood once more face to face.

She had a look that told of troubled days and restless nights. Her eyelids were heavy, with shadows about them. But the eyes she raised to him were filled with a sweeter and calmer light than he had ever seen them hold; and a smile came to her lips as she frankly extended her ungloved hand.

The man had long been schooling himself for this

interview, which he felt would be decisive of his hopes. His mind had pictured how she would look, what her manner would be, and the way in which she would meet him.

He had thought of what he would say to her, of the arguments he would use, even going so far as to formulate the words with which he would once more plead his love.

But now all this went for nothing. The sight of her, — a living reality; her wondrous beauty appealing to him more than ever by contrast with her sombre garb; her look of weariness and care, — these put to flight all his mental preparations and rehearsals.

There came instead, and stronger than ever, that hungry longing for her; that craving for her and her love; the feeling that now, as she stood there before him, she must be his, forever,— his to care for, to protect, and to make happy.

And so the words that issued tremulously from his lips were, "Loleta, I have found you at last! Will you not love me now?"

The lids drooped over her eyes, and the smile that had welcomed him was gone, as she turned her head away, with the same restless motion as that night when he had bared his heart to her.

Then their eyes met again, as she said, the words coming slowly, "Surely, after all these months, you do not come to me now to ask me all over again?"

The look in the passionate face, so far above her upraised one, made her lids fall again as he exclaimed, "But I do, Loleta! I come for that, and for nothing else. You and your love are now all I

can find worth living for. You know that I love you; but you cannot know the depth and strength of my love. And I could tell you so again and again, without ever tiring."

"No?" she said questioningly, and with a weary smile. "But have you never thought that I might tire of it, even if you did not?"

He drew back, the color leaving his face; and, stretching out his hands, he cried reproachfully, "How can you trifle with me and my love, — as true a love as ever a man had for a woman?"

"Trifle, I trifle?" she repeated. "I do think I can never feel to trifle with anything again."

Her voice was filled with bitterness, and the corners of her lips curled down in a way that killed their smiling.

But, paying no regard to this, he went on impetuously, determined to clear all his doubts.

"Do you know that I believe you love me, Loleta, although you will not tell me so?"

He saw the start she gave. And he saw as well the anger come to her eyes, as she drew herself up haughtily.

But this only intensified his feelings, and made him still more recklessly persistent.

"Some silly, old-time notion that Madame Harwood drilled into you is making you cruel to me, and to yourself!"

"Ah!" with a gasp. "Do you dare to think that?"

"Yes, I do," he answered doggedly; "for I can find no other explanation of what you say and do, unless

you care nothing whatever for me and my happiness. And this I cannot permit myself to believe."

"And will you stand there," she demanded indignantly, ignoring what he had said, "and argue to me unkindly of her — of my grandmère?"

"No," he replied, now more calmly; "not unkindly of her, for I know she loved you very dearly. But I will say this: That she was very proud, and very hard — one who would trample love ruthlessly underfoot, where pride spoke."

Loleta waited a moment, as though seeking how best to express her meaning; then she said gently, "It is but right that we should bear with the seeming pride and hardness of those to whom we owe love and respect; and especially when it is called out because of our own acts, which to them do seem wicked and degraded. You must remember that once I did repulse her bitterly; and that she did still love me, and did try to protect me from all the trouble my wickedness did cause. And you must remember as well that I did love her then, and that I do love her now."

She had placed her hand and arm closely about the marble cross, as if to protect the memory of her who slept beneath. And there was defiance, mingled with reproach, in the look she gave him.

But, paying no attention to this, nor to her words, he asked suddenly, "Loleta, will you answer me?"

"What shall I answer?"

She spoke listlessly, as if tired, and wishing the interview to end.

"Do not play with my words," he said, "and do

not seem to play with my feelings. Such things are not like you, and are unworthy of you. I want you to answer what I have asked; I 've no heart to talk of anything else. Say that you will love me; or, if you do not, that you will try to love me. I want you to tell me that you will be my wife."

He had gone around the graves, and, standing beside her, took both her hands, as he looked down into her eyes.

She glanced into his face as though afraid of him, while she repeated in a tone he could scarcely hear, "Your wife!"

"Yes, Loleta, — my wife! Answer me; do not say anything but 'Yes.' It must be 'Yes,' Loleta."

"But I must say No! And I do say it."

The words were cried out, as she snatched her hands from his clasp.

"Why have you come back here — why will you talk to me so?" she asked wildly. "Why will you not leave me alone? I am with the sisters; and it is there I do find the peace I need. It is there I shall live and die. And, if I do have to see you like this, I shall not come again from the island."

His eyes had been growing stony, and his face gray. And now he stepped slowly backwards, until the two graves were once more between them.

"I beg you to forgive me, and to believe that I will trouble you no more," he said, all the passion and fire gone from his voice, and the tenderness as well. "I ask your pardon for being so stupid as to have doubted that you really detest me, as you said long ago, — that my love is an unwelcome thing to you."

"But you are mistaken," she replied, speaking again very gently; "for I do not detest you — not now."

"Never mind about it," he said coldly; "for it must matter nothing to either of us. Shall I go back with you to the boat, or do you prefer to return alone?"

"Alone," was the reply, her voice sounding smothered and mechanical, like an echo of his last word.

He lifted his hat and walked quickly away. And shortly afterwards, from one of the headlands, he watched the boat that bore her off, until it was only a little speck nearing the beach along Bramble Island.

Over in the west the heads and shoulders of ponderous storm-clouds were shaping themselves above the bluish obscurity, with here and there a sheen of bronze upon them; and into this the sun went down as into a stormy sea.

CHAPTER XXXIX

"WE be goin' ter hev a big storm 'fore ther night 's far on," one of Uncle Darb's gaffers called out to a passer-by; for the platform and benches were well filled for the summer season.

Doctor Jasper heard the announcement with a sense of gratitude, and looked with absolute pleasure at the threatening sky.

Before returning to Captain Leslie's, he went around to Mrs. Bessly's house, and found her at the gate, dickering with a tin-man, whose cart, piled high with pans, pails, and dippers, well-nigh filled the narrow street.

He was an itinerant trader, who had paid Mrs. Bessly visitations for many seasons; although, such was the closeness of her bargainings, that he had been heard to express his thanks for the keen-witted widow having left him his "clothes to wear."

She now brought her negotiations to a speedy end, and having greeted Doctor Jasper effusively, ushered him into the dining-room, where Jane was at work sorting out the longest feathers from a heap of chicken plumage.

The girl welcomed him with evident pleasure, while Mrs. Bessly, after wiping some invisible dust from a chair, invited him to be seated.

"Well, now, Doctor Jasper," she began, "do tell us some o' the interestin' sights ye've seen." And, seating herself opposite him, she leaned back comfortably, prepared to be entertained.

But she was fated to disappointment; for he was in no humor for talking about anything concerning himself.

"I don't think I could tell much that would interest you," he said, adding, with a glance at the table, and hoping to change the subject, "Those feathers look like the coat of my old friend Sancho."

"They be," she answered. "Eph got a new rooster t' other day; an' Sancho, the old fool, started in to show him the law. An' now Sancho 's dead."

The Doctor, not caring to learn the details of the tragedy, asked the news of the past winter.

This was sufficient to set into motion Mrs. Bessly's thumbs and tongue; and she regaled him with much gossip of marriages, deaths, and births, some of it concerning people of whom he now heard for the first time.

"They 've got a new minister up at the Presbyterian Church," she announced, among other things. "An' most folks is glad Mr. Twombly 's gone; for he was gittin' dretful tiresome, an' seemed to be crazy 'bout prayin' in public. O' course one expects to hev meetin', an' sech things, opened with prayer; but Mr. Twombly 'd open a dance with prayer, if he could be got to go to one. Why, Doctor, I honestly b'lieve thet if he was to open a clam for bait, down on the beach, he 'd hev to do it with prayer."

Having thus exhausted one theme, she took up another.

"Wa'n't it a shame for the Harwood house to burn up? An' there 's Loleta, all thet 's left o' the fam'ly, stayin' with them nuns over on Bramble Island. Some folks in town is thinkin' hard o' her for doin' it. But then ye know Madam was a Papist when she got married; an' so 's all her folks."

The mention of Loleta's name brought back the ordeal through which he had passed that same afternoon. But he crushed down the thought of it, and answered gravely, "The nuns — the sisters, of the Roman Catholic Church — are good and brave women, Mrs. Bessly, and deserve nothing but praise for the work they have accomplished."

"Ugh — ugh," she grumbled, trying to bite the thread with which she was sewing, her face being partially buried in the folds of the work she had picked up. And raising her head, she asked rather suspiciously, "Be any o' your folks Papists?"

He perceived her drift, and smiled faintly.

"No, Mrs. Bessly; we are all Episcopalians."

"'Piscopalians! Is thet so? D' ye know thet when I first heerd o' high an' low 'Piscopals, I thought it meant rich, an' poor. An' lots o' folks hev the same notion."

He laughed, and asked with something of his old-time manner, "What is the name of the new minister you were speaking about? And have you been to hear him yet?"

"Oh, yes; me an' Eph went to hear him two Sundays ago. His name's Redmond, an' his hair's

fiery red; an' I keep thinkin' his name ought to be Redhead. But I don't like his preachin' a mite."

"Why not?" the Doctor inquired, glad to be entertained in her well remembered fashion. Indeed this had been his chief reason for seeking her, hoping, as he did, that it might serve, for a time at least, to change the current of his thoughts.

"He hollers so, an' thumps the Bible. I kept thinkin' how Miss Harriet Spencer 'd feel, if she was to come back to life an' see him pound an' bang thet Bible she gev the church a year 'fore she died. It 's edged with goldy-lookin' bands, with two big clasps o' the same stuff, whatever it is. An' it seemed a shame to see thet Redhead double up his fist an' pound it, jest as if he thought to thump savin' grace into sinners by hollerin' at 'em, an' poundin' as he did. An' then it was 'nough to spoil the Bible."

She stopped, but only to take breath; and then she was off again.

"Hev ye seen Lawyer Abbey's house, up on the ridge, thet he 's fixin' over so grand? He 's put a big portfolio on the south side, where the driveway comes up."

"A — what, did you say, Mrs. Bessly?"

"Why, a 'portfolio,' they call it; but mebbe I ain't got the name to sound as it should. It 's furrin — Spanish, most likely."

"Don 't you mean '*porte-cochère*,' Mrs. Bessly?" he asked soberly, as he turned to pick up the gay little duster which Jane had just finished.

"Well, p'r'aps thet 's the right name for the thing.

An' to mek it, they hed to tear down more 'n half thet bu-tee-ful ivory vine thet 's been growin' there ever since I can remember. Lawyer Abbey's uncle planted it."

She laid the sewing in her lap, and resting her hands upon it, began revolving her thumbs.

" He used to teach school over to'ards Pilot's-Head; me an' my two brothers went to him for three winters. A bashful man he was, an' half blind, bein' *thet* near-sighted; an' he was forever hevin' somethin' happen to mek folks laugh. Once 't was s'posed he was sparkin' Hannah Ellis, rich old Doctor Ellis's daughter. One evenin' he 'd been callin' there; an' when he come to leave, an' was backin' an' bowin' out 'n the room, like he always did, for manners, he bobbed his head up underneath the bird's cage. An' whack! — the bottom fell out, an' the water, seed, an' sand all come showerin' over him, an' into his hair, which was always so oiled up ye could smell him miles off. An' another night he was bowin' hisself away, while she an' some friends was sittin' on the piazzer. An' there bein' no railin' 'round it, I 'm blest if he did n 't back hisself clean off, his long legs flyin' up in the air like a big letter V, 'fore their very faces. Thet ended his courtin' Hannah Ellis, for they all laughed fit to kill theirselves, an' Hannah loudest of all. An' old Abbey marched home madder 'n a wet hen."

Doctor Jasper laughed heartily, much to Mrs. Bessly's satisfaction, for her sharp eyes had noted the changed appearance of his face. She felt, too, an alteration in his manner; and it troubled her.

"I wonder now, if Marg'ret 's sech a goose as to hev said 'No,' to him?" she queried to herself, as she watched him go up the street. "Thet is, if he 's asked her. An' I bet thet 's the main thing 's brought him back."

CHAPTER XL

IT was dark from the storm-clouds that had spread overhead, when the Doctor reached Captain Leslie's. The lighthouse lamp shone but feebly into the mists gathering thickly about Bramble Island; and he found himself wondering how it would be if the sea should wash over it entirely, and carry away the woman he loved.

"But I'll think no more to-night," he said impatiently, and almost aloud; for he felt as if a giant hand were holding his brain to a miserable thinking and wondering over her.

Several times during the evening Margaret's eyes met his with a questioning look. But, having no moment alone with her, he held his peace; and with little regret, as he was in no mood for talking.

All night the surges rolled high, and the wind came in rushing blasts that whipped the pouring rain. But the uproar only served to lull Doctor Jasper's worn-out senses and strained nerves.

The next morning, as he and Margaret sat together, he told her the story of the day before.

She listened in silence; and he ended by asking her, "Don't you now admit that you were mistaken?"

"In thinking Loleta cared for you?" she said, blushing, and not looking at him.

"Yes."

"Well, n-o," was her slow reply. "I cannot believe so, even now."

"I know so," he declared emphatically. "And I shall let her alone for the future."

"Will you?" There was manifest doubt in Margaret's glance and voice.

"Indeed I shall," he repeated firmly. "I believe, or at least I'd like to hope, that I still retain a little of my self-respect."

> "And out of her bosom there grew a red rose,
> And out of her lover's, a brier-ier-ier,"

carolled Captain Leslie somewhere in the distance; and there was a smile in the quick look Margaret gave Doctor Jasper. But she said no more.

The weeks went by, and he saw nothing of Loleta. He did not try, but kept away from the beach and the burying ground. Margaret brought reports of her after going with Uncle Billy to Bramble Island; and this was all.

It was early in July when the Doctor was summoned to his aunt, who had been laid low by illness. And he took himself to task for the feeling of reluctance with which he obeyed his sister's urgent request that he should come at once.

The old lady recovered after a short time, with her fondness for the world in nowise impaired. And her nephew forced himself, from a feeling of duty, to remain with her for a while.

But at the beginning of the third week there came a letter from Margaret; and as he read it, his heart seemed to stop its beating.

"The time has come when I must tell you something. And please do not blame me as much as I blame myself, fearing that I have made a mistake in not telling you before.

"Loleta is ill. She has been ill almost two weeks, but not seriously until within a few days. Doctor Mix had reported her as getting along favorably; and so I did not write, as I knew you must be occupied with your aunt, and I felt that she must need your care. And then I did not wish to alarm you without good reason. But now I must tell you of this, for Loleta has wanted you."

There was nothing more. But, coming from the always blithe Margaret, the words had a hinting of something between the lines, — enough to fill him with anxiety, and determine him to return at once.

Loleta had wanted him! This of itself would have brought him to her from the ends of the earth, and throttled any feeling of duty toward any one or anything else.

He was hastily packing a valise, when his aunt and sister fell upon him with many inquiries as to the reason for his sudden departure. But this only added irritation to the alarm which already possessed him.

"Don't ask me anything," he replied impatiently. "I must go, and as soon as I can get away. That is all I can say now. It is entirely my own affair, and need interest no one else."

"And when will you return?" they asked in a duet.

"I don't know; but I'll write and tell you. Don't ask me to talk about it now."

When he was gone, his aunt, alone with her niece, said fretfully, "I wonder what it is, Marian, that takes

Noel off so suddenly? I wish he would stop at home with us."

"That seems to be something he never cares to do nowadays," replied the niece, her angry eyes contradicting the calmness of her voice.

"Suppose," her aunt went on, speculatively, "he has been having a love affair with some one down there, — some girl with vulgar manners, and a loud voice, for such are the only sort who can live in that place, judging from all I've heard. Oh, dear! I wish he was more like other people, and not so eccentric and self-willed!"

But she whose hands held Noel Jasper's heart was now lacking the strength to be even so loud of voice as when her gentle tones last came to his ears.

He had parted from her with bitter sorrow raging in his heart, almost wishing that he might come to hate her, rather than know such utter hopelessness.

But there was nothing of this now — nothing but love for her to whom he was returning with all the haste he could command.

And yet, rapidly as the train sped along, how slowly the miles seemed to diminish, — how wearily the time dragged!

The gloom of his forebodings made the sunny landscape actually painful to him. Why should the fields be green, and the trees filled with ripening fruit; why should the birds sing, and nature put on its brightest face, when she whom he loved was, perhaps, fast nearing the dark shadows?

For must not this be true, when she could tell Margaret that she wanted him? And what could

he think but that, despite all her denials, — despite everything, she loved him?

The thought of this, even now, set his pulse to beating passionately.

The sight of the old town, with its familiar aspect and faces — of the sea, sparkling under the glory of a sunset sky — this seemed like the greeting of stanch friends, who, knowing his anxiety, sought to temper it with sympathy, and give him new hope.

He went directly to the Leslie house, where Eliza, her face unusually grave, met him at the door. She greeted him quietly, and took him at once to the little smoking-room, where he found the Captain alone; for Margaret was with the sick girl.

The Doctor having declined his friend's urgent offer of refreshment, they went out immediately in search of Uncle Billy. The old man lost no time in getting a boat ready; and shortly thereafter Doctor Jasper stepped upon the beach at Bramble Island.

He met Margaret and Doctor Mix at the door of the main building, and, addressing himself to the latter, made a few rapid, searching inquiries bearing upon Loleta's symptoms and condition.

Doctor Mix answered his questions fully, saying that the fever was nearing its crisis; and he added that, in his own opinion, there was little in her favor.

Permission was readily obtained for Doctor Jasper to see the patient; then he and Margaret went to the sick chamber.

He crossed over to where Loleta was lying, upon a small cot, perfectly quiet, as if sleeping. And standing there, looking down at the changed face

and tawny head, so boyish in contour (for her hair had been cut), a measureless depth of emotion swept over him.

He felt as never before how truly it was that the melancholy accidents of her life had made suffering and sorrow so familiar as to have become its keynote, banishing all hope of happiness or love. His thoughts went backward, over the rough path her tender feet had been forced to tread; and his heart ached until the pain went to his throat.

"Oh, my darling — my poor little girl!"

This was all he could whisper, as he sank to his knees by her side.

She had wanted him!

She was lying unconscious, and — as his judgment told him — very close to another world. And she had wanted him!

This gave him a comfort such as he had never felt in all his loving her.

There was a quivering of the white lids; then her eyes opened wide. But, although she looked steadily into his face, he knew that she did not recognize him.

She began muttering rapidly in French, and then exclaimed in English, "Do you hear? I must go! They are calling me, and I must go! It is that they are calling me!"

Then the lids fell again over the gold-brown eyes, that seemed to be looking at unseen forms.

Margaret, who had been standing at the window, now came to the bedside and looked at the white, still face.

"She will quiet down now," she whispered softly;

"then she will waken again, and be quite sensible for a time. That is the way she has been doing all night and all day. Now tell me," the girl added, tears glittering in her eyes, "do you agree with all that Doctor Mix said to you?"

"As to most of it — yes; I am forced to agree with him."

He spoke hopelessly, his voice filled with agony.

Margaret appeared to have become years older since Doctor Jasper last saw her. She had, notwithstanding her father's misgivings, and Eliza's warmly expressed disapproval, insisted upon remaining with Loleta these past two days, and sharing the sister's vigil. And well had she redeemed the promise made to Doctor Mix, when he warned her that he must not trust her to do this unless she could retain full control of her nerves and feelings.

She was now holding one restless little hand, that had begun to flutter pitifully, although the eyelids did not lift again.

The fingers quieted at her touch, as she knelt beside the cot; and raising her face to the Doctor, now standing opposite, she whispered "She is asleep again."

He was thoroughly familiar with the disease which had taken so powerful a hold upon Loleta. And, now that she was quiet, he examined into her condition with a care greater than had been stirred into action during all his career as a physician.

There was little he could find to encourage the slightest hope. But he was certain there would be no decided change within forty-eight hours, and that

it would be entirely safe for him to return — as he knew that he must — to Captain Leslie's house for the night.

Margaret insisted as before upon staying with Loleta; and Doctor Jasper sailed back to report to her father, whom he found, watching for his return, upon the old wharf.

As he reached the top step, Captain Leslie laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"So here you are, my lad? And I'm glad you have come." Then he added, before the Doctor could reply, "Don't say a word until you've had something to eat and drink. Come right along to the house with me, and have supper. Only one thing first — tell me if my Pegaway is all chipper and lively."

"She is well, Captain, and wished me to tell you so, with her love."

"Then that's all I want to hear just now; so come along."

Mrs. Bessly, with several brown paper parcels in her arms, was standing at her gate; and seeing the two men coming from the wharf, she crossed the street to speak with them.

"Do tell me, Doctor Jasper," she inquired anxiously, "how be Loleta Harwood?"

"She is very sick, Mrs. Bessly; very sick indeed."

"O' course, o' course. But she'll git well fast 'nough, won't she?"

"We must hope so."

He made a strong effort to control his voice. But, to the woman's alert eyes and quick intuitions, its

husky tone, together with the look he now cared nothing if all the world should see in his face — these told their own tale.

Her eyes dimmed as she asked with prompt sympathy, "Is there anythin' I can do, Doctor?"

He shook his head.

"Nothing. She has the best of care, and everything possible is being done for her."

They went on up the street, and she slowly entered the house. Her face bore an expression of awed amazement; and, marvellous to say, she was silent for some little time.

But later on, when she took the caddy from the closet and began measuring out the tea, she said to her niece, "Jane Bessly, d' ye know Loleta Harwood 's dyin'? An' I b'lieve it 's her thet Doctor Jasper 's been eatin' his heart out for all this time."

"I thought so all along, Aunt," Jane remarked timidly.

"Oh, ye did, did ye?" Mrs. Bessly demanded, her voice losing its softness. "I 'd like to know how many years of experience an' times o' love-mekin' give ye wisdom to know so much more 'n your elders?"

"Well, Aunt, I always thought so just the same," said the girl, with no show of resentment, but rather an undertone of apology for having ventured to think at all.

Mrs. Bessly grumbled something, but now in a less aggressive tone; and, as she bustled back and forth during her preparations for tea, she gave utterance to her train of thought:

"To think how them Harwoods hev been scooted out'n the world in the past few years! There was a time, an' not more 'n twelve years back, thet ye could n't open the door an' fire out a bootjack 'thout like 's not hittin' a passin' Harwood; an' all of a sudden they 're scarcer 'n huckleberries in winter. An' now here 's Loleta, the most bu-tee-ful o' the hull lot, dyin' over there on Bramble Island. It 's comfortin' to know thet Marg'ret Leslie 's with her, 'though the Captain must be nerved over thet, too. An' lands! I hope Marg'ret don't ketch nothin'. I do wish the town hed never sold Bramble Island, for all them children to be bringin' sickness 'mong us."

CHAPTER XLI

ANOTHER day passed, and Loleta had not been conscious. And when Doctor Jasper reached the island early in the second evening, Doctor Mix told him what he knew already — that the crisis was now at hand, with its fiat of death, or of renewed life. Then the worthy man, glad to leave the younger one in charge, went off in the boat with Uncle Billy, who had brought Doctor Jasper over — this time to remain until morning.

He walked rapidly across the narrow strip of sward lying between the beach and buildings, the whole place now seeming as familiar to him as if he had spent months there.

The outer door was opened by a nun, who bade him go directly upstairs, where Margaret and one of the sisters were expecting him.

He paused as Margaret opened the door of the sick-room, and his eyes sought the corner where Loleta's head lay shining amid the snowy pillows.

She appeared to be sleeping, and her hands lay, white and nerveless, upon the coverlid.

Crossing the room quickly he stood a moment looking down at her; then, bending over, he carefully slipped the tips of his fingers under one frail wrist.

The pulse was very weak, and fluttered uneasily.

He did not remove his hand, but stood leaning over the bed, and finding comfort in touching her. But he looked away from the sleeping face, as if fearing she might be awakened or disturbed by the agony burning in his eyes.

Margaret had seated herself by a window, and was looking out at the growing night; but, now and again, her handkerchief stole to her eyes. And the sister had retired to a far corner of the room, whence came the soft clicking of her beads.

And so the minutes came and went, until Doctor Jasper gently released Loleta's wrist. Then, passing noiselessly from the room, he left the house, not pausing until he reached the beach.

Here, battling with his agony, he stood looking out over the sea, to where, far down in the east, shone a lone planet; and a sudden calm fell upon him.

But it was the calm that comes from despair; for now it was as if he had always known what the end might be.

His thoughts wandered from much that had been torturing him, as he stared mechanically at the star. It was burning clearer each moment, and seemed appealing to him, as if bearing sympathy from a higher, holier world.

He recalled Loleta's words, when she said, with such a hard curving of her sweet mouth, "Clouds driven by a wind; stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever! I am of these!"

He understood them now, and realized, in the light that had come to him, how pitifully true they were;

how they seemed to sum up the story of her life — its sacrifices and miseries.

Up and down he paced, while the light grew dimmer; for there was no moon, — only the radiance from the stars glistening overhead. The tide came creeping up until it reached his feet; then it began to recede, leaving broader the little stretch of sand. And still he paced up and down, following the water-line as it withdrew from the shore, his untiring feet making scarcely a mark upon the firm, smooth surface of the beach.

The shining planet had risen high enough to be merged with its fellows, when Margaret's voice sounded at his elbow.

"She is asking for you; and I left her with the sister, until I could find you."

He was gone before she had finished speaking; and standing once more beside Loleta's bed, he bent to catch the words she was striving to utter.

Her eyes were lifted to his face; and in them was a light whose meaning he feared.

Her words were scarcely audible. But love's ears are keen, and the faint voice had no need to strive long.

Turning to the calm-faced sister, he asked her to leave them alone; and, after an instant's hesitation, she glided softly away.

Kneeling by the cot, he passed his arm beneath the pillows, raising her a little, until the curly head, so like Captain Jack's, lay against his shoulder. Then, bending still closer, he whispered, "What is it, Loleta?"

"Am I to die?"

He shivered, and trembled, despite the effort he made to control himself. He was silent; but it was a silence of heaving shoulder and breast; the silence of a ghastly face; of a close hand-clasp.

"Answer me, please," came to his ears as from afar-off. "I do have no fear — none."

Still he could not speak, and dared not try, lest his voice should betray him.

He thought that he felt her, ever so softly, nestle closer to him. Then she whispered — and the words struck thrillingly through his mad grief, "I want you to put my hand upon your cheek, while I do say it."

"Say what?" he gasped, lifting his head so that his face lay close to her own, — so close that their eyes almost touched. And he beheld in hers a light like the shining majesty of death.

Then softly, the sweet voice dying away like that of a tired child falling happily asleep in its mother's arms, the words came distinctly to him:

"God bless and keep my heart's dearest!"

He thought her mind was wandering. Or was his own becoming unbalanced? But he lifted her hand and placed it on his cheek.

The white lids were raised once more; the great eyes, clearly intelligent, but full of an unspeakable sadness, met his.

She smiled, and whispered, "Yes, if it is that I am going, I may say it. And I did love you always — always!"

Her fingers wandered weakly from his cheek, to

touch his hair. Then they fell away, and she was still.

. . . . . .

With a new life seeming to mingle with the blood in his veins, yet half distracted between hope and despair, he tried to hush the beating of the heart that pillowed her head, holding close the death-like form, as if to shield it from the grim presence hovering so near.

Could it be that she had been given to him for this one brief moment, and was then to be taken away forever?

If this must be, he felt that he could never more believe in a merciful God.

So, fighting off despair, and clinging fiercely to hope, it was as if his own strong vitality must be pouring into her feeble heart-beats.

He could not have told how long it was before he dared raise his face to look at her. And when he did, it was no shame to his manhood that the unvoiced prayer of his heart sprang to tears of thanksgiving, dimming the eyes that saw tiny drops of moisture — like dew in a white lily's cup — lying upon her forehead.

He knew that death was defeated.

Truly it was that she was not dead, but in that dreamless slumber which must last many hours, and whose ending would be the prelude to recovery.

Noiselessly, as a spider spinning its web, his strong arms gently let their precious burden slip back upon the pillow; and kneeling there, he laid his head against the bed, while his thankful tears had their way.

He was roused by the gentle pressure of a hand upon his shoulder, and lifting his head, saw Margaret standing beside him, her eyes fixed upon Loleta's face.

He rose silently, while she glanced questioningly at him, and back again to the still form.

Laying a finger upon his lip, he beckoned her from the room, the door of which he closed softly.

"She is not dead?" whispered the girl, resting a hand on his arm.

He shook his head, and a smile illumined his haggard face.

"She will live; only we must be careful to let her sleep as long as possible."

"Thank God!" murmured Margaret, her voice choked by glad tears of relief.

"Amen, and Amen!" said Noel Jasper, with reverent gratitude.

CHAPTER XLII

TWO days later, Mrs. Bessly, looking from a window, saw Margaret hurrying homeward from the wharf; and, presuming that Uncle Billy had brought her from Bramble Island, she lost no time in sallying out to interview him.

She found the old man preparing to go home, and was struck by a curious expression, as of repressed excitement, in his unusually florid face.

"What under the canopy has Marg'ret Leslie come home in sech a hurry for, Uncle Billy? I hope it ain't 'cause Loleta's dead."

Uncle Billy's reply assumed the form of chuckles.

"Dead?" he repeated, with a jocoseness really unsuited to the word. "Wa'l, scurcely, Marm." And he laughed unrestrainedly.

"Whatever is ailin' ye?" demanded Mrs. Bessly, with rising indignation.

"Can't ye let a feller larf a bit? Laird — it's 'nough o' larfin' out t' other side o' ther mouth we've all hed o' late," he replied, his face sobering.

"But what 's up, — what was ye laughin' at?" she insisted, scenting a choice piece of gossip.

"Wa'l," he replied, the twinkle returning to his eyes, and the corners of his mouth widening again, "it's only thet I heerd over on Bramble, jest now,

thet we 're all ter go weddinin'. There ain't goin' ter be no funeral jest yet, Marm Bessly; but ye must be gittin' out yer weddin' finery."

He began to chuckle once more; but Mrs. Bessly took the matter seriously, and looked severely at the old man.

"D' ye mean to tell me Doctor Jasper an' Loleta Harwood 's goin' to git married?"

"So he told me hisself, not an hour back, soon 's she gits well, which she 's doin' fast; an' me an' Miss Marg'ret was talkin' it over as we come 'cross. I were s'prised, Marm," the old man added, lowering his voice, while he glanced about to ssure himself there were no listeners; "I were s'prised ter see how pleased Miss Marg'ret seemed ter be herself over it. Ye see I 've been clean out o' my soundin's, for I 'd reckoned thet Doctor Jarsper an' Miss Marg'ret—"

"Shoo!" interrupted Mrs. Bessly, as if Uncle Billy were an offending rooster invading her flower bed. "What crazy nonsense hev ye been gittin' into thet old head o' yourn? Men can never see beyond their own noses."

She spoke with an air of lofty superiority, entirely unmindful of her recent conversation with Jane, and as if glad to feel that one menber of her own sex—to wit, herself—was blessed with unerring insight.

Up at the Leslie house, Margaret, held close in her father's arms, was crying softly.

"My lass, my Pegaway," the Captain said, patting her on the back, and rumpling the short curls half-buried in his coat, "it 's not like you to do this; but you 're all tuckered out, playing sick-nurse. I 'm

glad the Doctor made you come home; for now Eliza must turn in and nurse *you*."

She looked up at him and laughed, although a little hysterically, and remonstrated at his solicitude, adding that she felt as she did on account of being so glad that Loleta was past all danger, and that everything promised to come out all right. Then her voice broke, and she buried her face once more against his breast, sobbing in a way that troubled him.

"Now see here, my lass! It's time I took command of this ship, and I'm going to do it. So I tell you that not one step to Bramble Island do you go again until you are more like yourself. If it's all settled between the Doctor and Loleta, and she has but to get well and marry him, and then be carried off to Europe, to be dry-docked with him in a flood of happiness, you are needed there no more; but your old daddy always needs you."

His arms tightened their clasp as a harder sob came from the folds of his coat; and the sound brought to his eyes a look such as those of a tender-hearted mother might have shown.

Presently he spoke again; and his voice held a deeper note, with a tremulousness which softened it still more.

"Your old daddy's world could have no sun in it without you; and he's not going to let any man or woman on earth, no matter who they are, upset his Pegaway. So mind me, lass,—you are to stay with me, in this house; and nothing short of death or an earthquake shall take you to Bramble Island again until I say so."

CHAPTER XLIII

OVER the hills a glittering cloud-column stretched westward to the almost down sun. Restless waves, breaking far out upon invisible rocks, made a long line of discolored foam, blown in circular masses to the sands of gold, over which strands of torn seaweed lay, tossed about, or heaped in uneven furrows where the fall storms had lashed the sea to strew them.

The full-set sails of incoming craft were showing a touch of sunset light, faintly pink, as the vessels approached their haven, cutting the water so quietly as to leave scarcely a ripple upon its surface.

The tide was fast coming in. The waves were beginning to chase one another with more ponderous bounds about the rock-piles. And the dry yellow sand was being engulfed by little gurgling ripples, every third or fourth of them reaching an inch or so higher than those that came before, and stirring the pebbles into a swishing remonstrance.

Up in the old burying ground the stillness was broken only by the crickets hidden in the withering grass, and the far-away roar of the breakers pounding alongshore. To the west ran the wooded hills, their frost-turned leaves making a picture of glory against the cloudless blue of the sky. To the east was the bluer sea, restless, and far-reaching.

For more than an hour of the late afternoon an old man had been pottering about one of the plots, removing vagrant leaves, and plucking the stray weeds.

It had been truly "a labor of love," sought and undertaken with no one's knowledge save his own.

He reached stiffly for a loosely tied bunch of feathery chrysanthemums lying on the grass, and turned himself about with painful slowness to place them upon the small mound near which he knelt.

"My little lad," he murmured, as he laid them down with clumsy tenderness, "d' ye sleep well, I wonder? I don't; for I hev ter spell 'rheumertism' 'bout ev'ry way it 's ter be spelt, by ther pain o' nights. But it 's a great comfort ter come up here ter set, an' think o' good things, — angels, an' Heaven, an' ther like. My old mother 's over there waitin'; an' so be you, Cap'n Jack. I 'm sure ye 're watchin' an' waitin' ter see Uncle Billy's old hulk come sailin' in 'mong all ther finer craft thet 's anchored 'long ther Heavenly shore, safe from ragin' storms an' tearin' winds."

He rose laboriously, and removed the battered hat from his silvered head.

"Good night t' ye, my little lad; I 'm goin' home now ter ther bungalow. An' when ther bells strike for my turnin' in ter my Heavenly bungalow, my everlastin' prayer 'll be thet you 'll be ther one our good Lord lets come ter tow this old hulk inter harbor."

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